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editor's letter



Juliet at the Great Dixter Plant Fair.

When the team and I are putting the magazine together, we like to keep in mind the mantra 'beautiful and useful'. It's easy to get seduced by gorgeous images of gardens and plants, and obviously these are fundamental, but in addition we want to provide great information, interesting insights and lots of recommendations. Recently I came across another expression: 'pleasure and purpose', which also helps frame

what we're trying to achieve here at GARDENS ILLUSTRATED. Kew-trained gardener Rory Duso's feature on the best climbing plants is a good example. The plants are chosen to fulfil a particular function, for instance to enliven a nondescript wall or bring colour in winter, but they are also a delight to look at. Along similar lines, our feature on vintage garden tools looks at practical equipment that has stood the test of time, is designed to be a joy to use and has the beauty of a well-loved possession.

Last month I joined the reader event on Kitchen Gardens that we held at Great Dixter. It was a great success and we've had some lovely letters from those who attended. Fortuitously, it was preceded by the Dixter Plant Fair. The selection of nurseries was outstanding and it was wonderful to meet up with readers and friends at our little stand. I love these gardeners' get-togethers and am very much looking forward to the new GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival that we're holding in Malmesbury next April (details on page 8), which I'm hoping will be a good example of 'beautiful and useful' and 'pleasure and purpose'. I hope to see you there. Enjoy the issue.



GARDENS ILLUSTRATED is available as a digital edition – search 'Gardens Illustrated' on the App Store, Google Play or Zinio.com

Juliet



Rory Duso recommends *Parthenocissus henryana* in his feature on the best climbing plants, page 58.



We hope you'll join us at our first GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival next April. Details on page 8.

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Kew-trained gardener, author and television presenter.



DAN PEARSON
Garden designer, plantsman and columnist.

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COVER IMAGE

Hydrangea anomala
subsp. *petiolaris*

Photography by
Susanne H Wiik

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ANDRÉ REUTER, ANDREW MONTGOMERY, MAAYKE DE RIDDER

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EVENTS AND OFFERS

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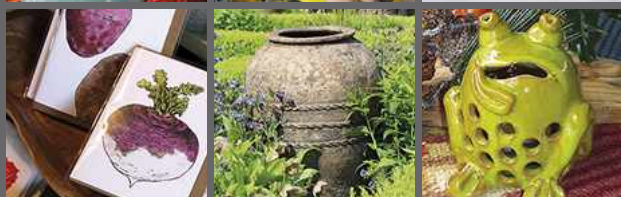


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contributors



SIMONE VAN HEININGEN

Dutch writer Simone enjoys the challenges of gardening on her apartment's balconies. Her fascination with other people's gardens has taken her around the world, but on page 68 she stays close to home to visit the inspiring Kwekerij Arborealis.

"Sietske and Micha's knowledge of trees and shrubs is impressive, but it was their youthful enthusiasm that really got to me."



ANDRÉ REUTER

André's photographs of gardens, interiors and country life feature in magazines around the world. He enjoys his own slice of country life in his cottage on the north German coast where he lives with his wife and their dogs. His pictures of Christian Korsch's garden are on page 32.

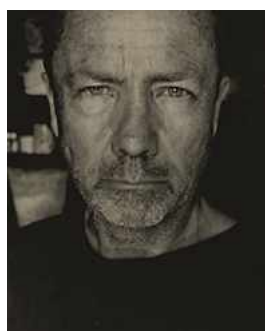
"Christian is in his garden, planting and cutting, from sunrise to dusk – he's a real artist. All the details he creates are very inspiring."



INA SPERRL

Journalist and author Ina lives and works in Cologne in western Germany. A keen gardener and lover of all things green, she is never happier than when she is exploring a new garden. On page 32 she gets the opportunity to look around Christian Korsch's garden and is not disappointed.

"Christian's garden is worth the long journey. When you are there you feel like you are in paradise – even in autumn."



CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Charlie's first photograph was of his childhood garden, using a Box Brownie packed with Potty Putty to keep the light from leaking in. He's moved on since then and his portraits now appear in leading magazines worldwide. On page 66 he captures Nick Macer in suitably contemplative mood.

"Luck's often the vital ingredient in photography. I'd finished Nick's shoot when I saw the shot, pressed the shutter, and it worked."

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Garden sundries to browse and buy



Held in Malmesbury – historic market town



Visit Abbey House Gardens

Taking place in the Cotswold market town of Malmesbury, the new GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival will offer a fascinating programme of talks from leading experts and gardening VIPs. There'll also be photography and garden art workshops, and readings from GARDENS ILLUSTRATED's regular columnist Frank Ronan.

In the grounds of Malmesbury's sacred Abbey Cloister Gardens you'll find a beautiful, traditional marquee, with a selection of exhibitors chosen from our favourite nurseries and suppliers of beautiful garden products. Plus freshly made teas, coffees and lunches will be served.

And while you're in Malmesbury, don't miss a visit to Abbey House Gardens with its formal knot gardens, woodland, riverside walks and spectacular tulip displays.

Full details of all events and how to book can be found at

gardensfestival.com



Dan Pearson

Troy Scott-Smith

Chris Marchant

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Alys Fowler

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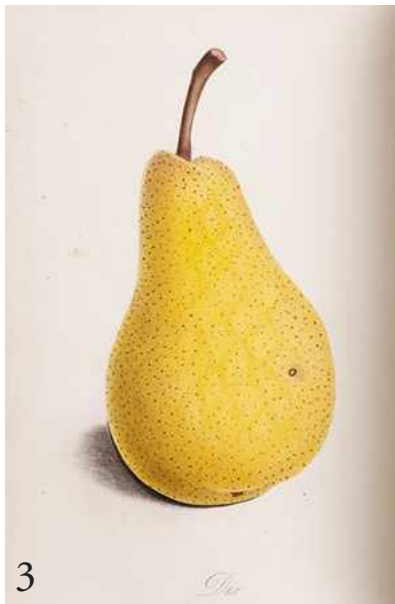
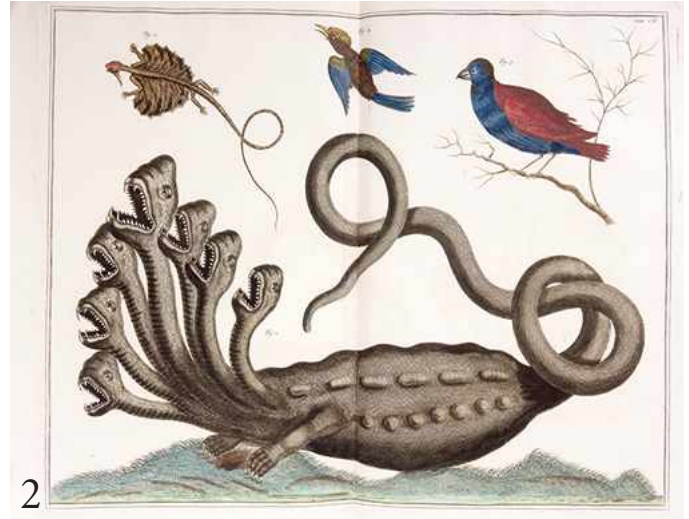
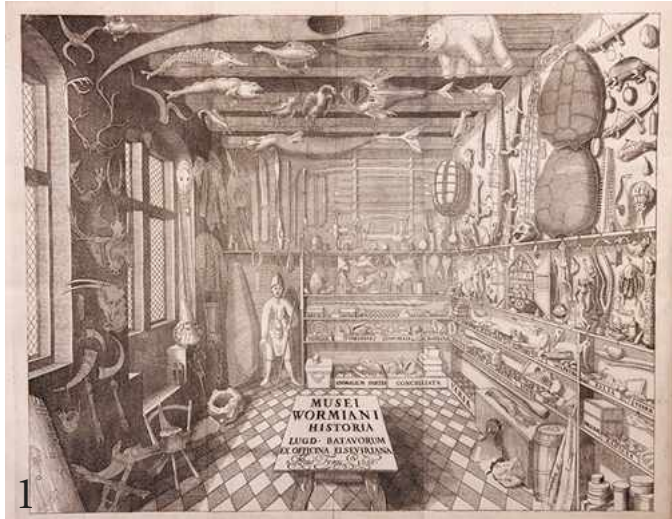
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Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY SORREL EVERTON



1 Depiction of the 'Musei Wormiani Historia' a natural history cabinet of curiosities collected by Ole Worm in the 17th century.

2 This seven-headed hydra appears in Albertus Seba's 18th-century *Cabinet of Natural Curiosities*, depicting animals, plants, insects – and fantastical beasts.

3 'Dix' pear from *Fruits and Fruit Trees of America* (1850).

4 *The Nurseryman's Specimen Book of American Horticulture*, c.1870, demonstrating the aesthetic and financial benefits to farmers of planting fruit trees.

5 *Flos solis maior* from *Hortus Eystettensis* (1613), considered the earliest pictorial record of flowers in a single garden.

EXHIBITION AND BOOK

Flora Illustrata

The New York Botanical Garden Mertz library holds among its archive a collection of pioneering botanical works dating from the 12th century to the present. Now more than 50 of these rarely seen works will be on show at the library in an exhibition, *Flora Illustrata*. The exhibition coincides with the publication of a book of the same name (see page 99 for review) and highlights include *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage*, published in 1709 in Paris and the first gardening manual complete with design layouts for gardens in French classical style. There's also a 1748 edition of Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*, which introduced one of the botanist's major innovations in identifying plants according to their sexual parts. The exhibition runs from 15 November to 19 January 2015 in the NYBG library building. nybg.org



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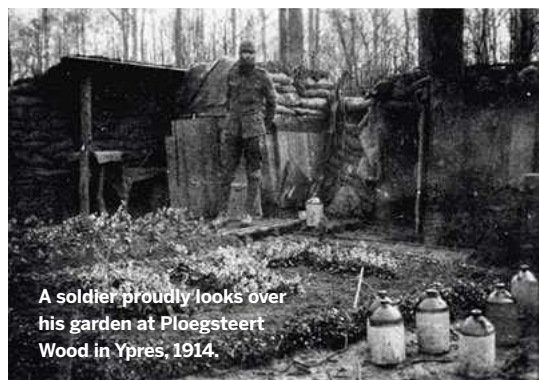
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A soldier proudly looks over his garden at Ploegsteert Wood in Ypres, 1914.

TALK

Gardens and guns

As part of the Garden Museum's exhibition looking at the impact of war on parks and gardens, author and landscape architect Kenneth Helphand gives a talk on 'Defiant Gardens'. He recounts moving stories of how scraps of land have been turned to gardens in the most extreme of situations – including WWI trenches and WWII POW camps – as symbols of hope, beauty and longed-for home. 11 November, £15. The Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB. Tel 020 7401 8865, www.gardenmuseum.org.uk



TO BUY

Flowers for every month

This gorgeous wall calendar for 2015 comes from Rifle Paper's creative Anna Bond. The new Les Fleurs calendar has a vibrant floral illustration for each month. Available from northlighthomestore.com for £20. Plus, you'll find plenty of other lovely floral-inspired stationery from Rifle Papers available from the same site (see also riflepaperco.com for their full range of products).

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LAUTARO / ALAMY

PLANTS IN PARIS

Learn about gardens and plants while soaking up the atmosphere of Paris with The Plant School's new course. Based at the French capital's botanic garden Jardin des Plantes with an introduction from horticulturist Maite Delmas, the course runs over one day a month from March to June 2015 and is taught in English. For more information about this course, and others run by The Plant School in the UK call 01327 861150 or go to theplantschool.org



The Jardin des Plantes provides inspiration for The Plant School.

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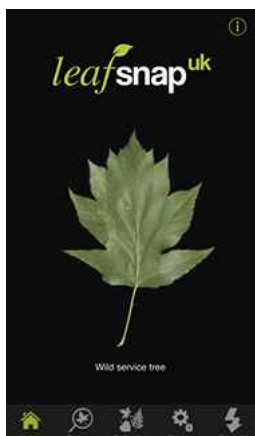
Name that tree

Get plant savvy with these smartphone apps from the Natural History Museum.

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PlantSnapp provide plant identification, care details and online order suppliers for any plant query submitted to Plant Snapp's network of horticultural experts.

Both available via the App Store.



Diary

• Whichford Pottery workshop

Throwing and hand-building techniques to create your own garden pots. 1 November, 9.30am-1.30pm, £75. Note that drying and firing takes approximately six weeks. Whichford Pottery, Whichford, Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire CV36 5PG. Tel **01608 684416**, whichfordpottery.com

• Introduction to chain sawing

Learn how to handle chain saws safely and efficiently. One-day course at Wilderness Woods, 1 November, 9am-4pm, £130. Wilderness Wood, Hadlow Down, East Sussex TN22 4HJ. For info and booking contact **scott@scottfrasertraining.co.uk** or tel **01825 731810**.

• Free Day Friday

Enjoy free entry and autumn colours in all four RHS gardens at Wisley, Hyde Hall, Rosemoor and Harlow Carr. 7 November.

rhs.org.uk/gardens/Whats-on-at-RHS-Gardens

• Syon Park Enchanted Woodland

Enjoy a walk through Syon Park, illuminated to magical effect. From 21 November to 7 December, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 5-9pm (with last entry at 8pm). Adults £7, children £3. Syon Park, London Road, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 8JF. Tel **020 8560 0882**, enchantedwoodland.com



Syon Park's Enchanted Woodland.

• Plant propagation and pruning fruit trees

Learn stem, root and leaf cuttings, division and layering methods of plant propagation. 5 November, 10.30am – 12.30pm, £32. Pruning Fruit Trees – an easy-to-follow tutorial and practical demonstration. 12 November, 10.30am-12.30pm, £32. Both at Barnsdale Gardens, The Avenue, Exton, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8AH.

Tel **01572 813200**, barnsdalegardens.co.uk

• Garden to Table cookery course

Vegetarian recipes using ingredients from the garden. 16 November, 9am-4.30pm, £185. Bettys Cookery School, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 2QU.

Tel **01423 814016**, bettyscookeryschool.co.uk

• Advanced Planting Course

Learn about contemporary styles of meadow, prairie and matrix planting. 29 November, 10am-4pm, £95. The Cotswold Gardening School, Gossington Hall, Gossington, Glos GL2 7DN. Tel **01453 899018**, cotswoldgardeningschool.co.uk

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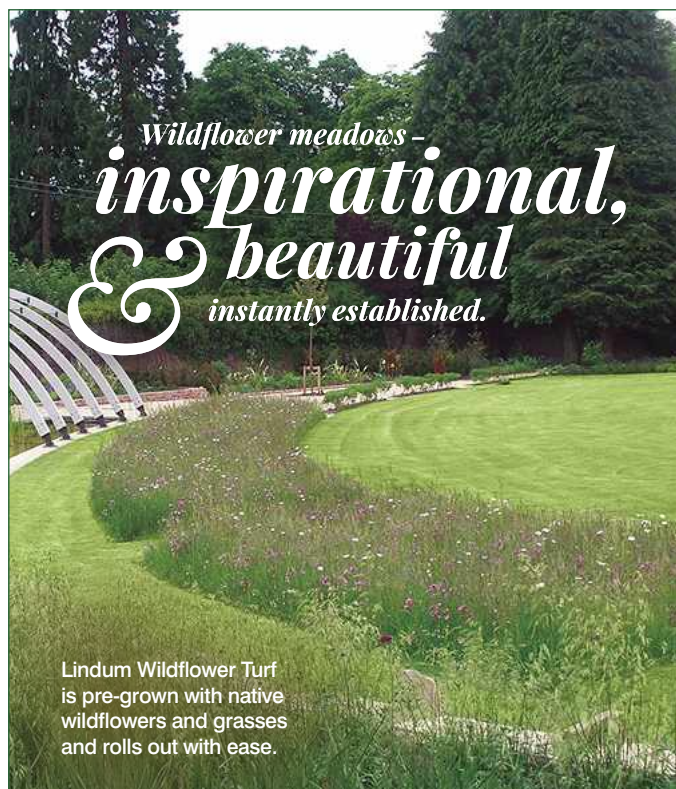
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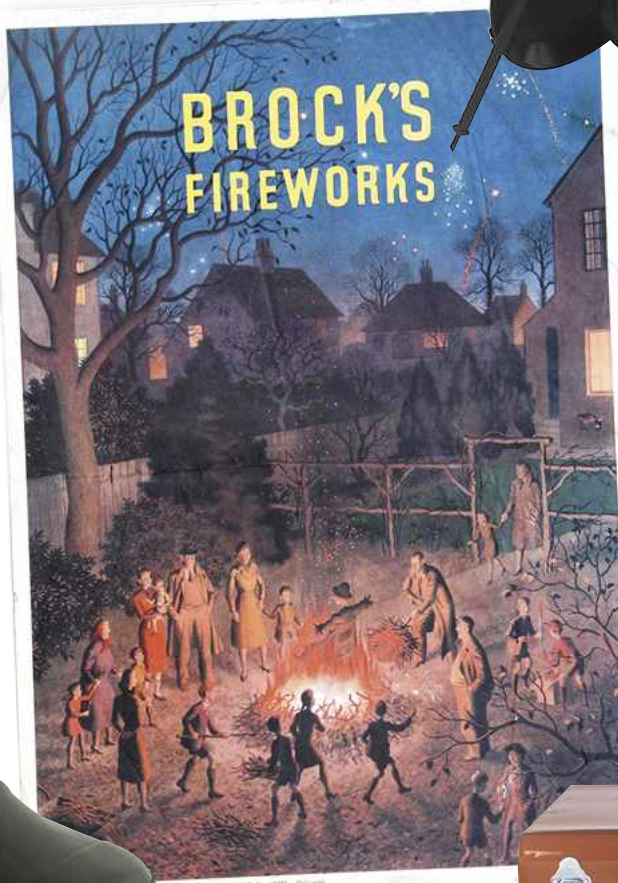
Bon-Fire outdoor cooking set with brazier, £324.95, 01308 426499, wildstoves.co.uk



Merino rib fingerless gloves, indigo, £29, 0333 400 5200, toa.st



Ladies tall spats boots, black, £65, spats-boots.com



'Brock's Fireworks' 1950s vintage poster, 40 x 54cm, £20, museumofbritishfolklore.bigcartel.com



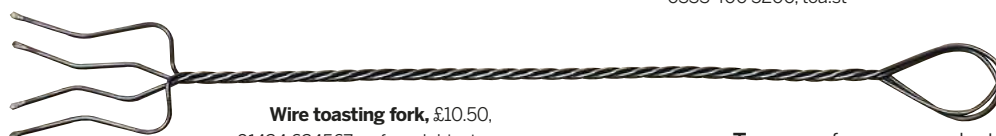
Kilner glass drinks dispenser, £29.99, 01539 488100, lakeland.co.uk



Small tin trunk, tamarind, £49, 0333 400 5200, toa.st



Bonfire Toffee smokey black loose leaf tea with caramel and apple, £4.95 for 50g, 01273 681792, bluebirdteaco.com



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Miscanthus sinensis 'Malepartus'

Miscanthus is a wonderful, very upright grass. It blooms in late summer with silky, slender-fingered flower spikes that gradually fluff out and stand all winter. The flowers of 'Malepartus' are dark red for a month then fade to silver and finally gold all winter. Books tell you to cut the plants down in March when you see new growth, but I can't be bothered. The skeletal dead flowers stay until almost July above the new green growth. I used 'Malepartus' to make a grass hedge between the grass of the orchard and the grass of the field

Height 1.8-2.1m.

Growing conditions Sun, any soil.

Hardiness USDA 5.

Origin East Asia.

Season of interest August – April.





November plants

Derry Watkins chooses some of her favourite plants that are sure to give your garden one last blast of late-season colour

WORDS DERRY WATKINS PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

Derry Watkins is the owner of Special Plants nursery near Bath specialplants.net



Hydrangea macrophylla 'Merveille Sanguine'

As summer turns to autumn, the leaves of 'Merveille Sanguine' gradually turn purple, setting off the dusky, deep purple-pink flowers to perfection. On acid soils the flowers are positively violet. I am not usually a hydrangea lover, but this one is an irresistible drama queen. Hydrangeas like good soil, which does not dry out, and a bit of shade and shelter, but don't give 'Merveille Sanguine' too much shade or the leaves will revert to green. Morning sun is usually best. The name translates perfectly – 'bloody marvellous'.

Height 1.5m.

Growing conditions Sun or light shade.

Hardiness USDA 7.

Origin Japan.

Season of interest July – November.



Polygala 'Africana'

Polygalas are tender evergreen shrubs from South Africa. The best make brilliant conservatory plants where they can bloom all year. Outdoors in a sheltered sunny position, perhaps against a wall, they will bloom for six months. A hard winter will see them off, but even one summer of the pretty pea-like flowers is worth it. Each flower has a tiny white beard like the closely related English wild flower, milkwort. *Polygala* 'Africana' has a particularly good compact habit, blue-grey leaves and lots of flower.

Height 80cm.

Growing conditions Sun, good drainage and shelter from hard frost.

Hardiness USDA 9.

Origin South Africa.

Season of interest Year round in a conservatory, June – November outdoors.

Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn'

An old, cottage garden favourite, one of the earliest shrubs to bloom. Tough as old boots, it is one of the plants that survives and even thrives in abandoned gardens, gradually spreading. Boring in summer, but worth having in a neglected corner so you can pick a few sprigs to bring into the house in winter. The pale-pink flowers are borne on naked stems in mild spells throughout the winter. The intensely sweet spicy fragrance promises spring is on the way as early as November. AGM*.

Height 3m.

Growing conditions Sun or part shade.

Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5†.

Origin Hybrid developed at Bodnant garden 1934-35.

Season of interest November – March.



*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



Solanum laxum 'Album'

Originally called *Solanum jasminoides* 'Album', the pure white flowers are very jasmine-like, though only slightly fragrant. They appear in profusion from midsummer through late autumn. It is a fast-growing, vigorous, scrambling climber, and given a minimum of support it will grow up two storeys or more. Every few years I cut it back hard and tell it to start again rather than trying to control its free-form, extravagant growth. It is not completely hardy, so some years it dies back to the ground and some years it dies altogether. AGM.

Height 6m.

Growing conditions Full sun, south-facing wall.

Hardiness USDA 8.

Origin Brazil.

Season of interest July – November.

Ruscus aculeatus 'John Redmond'

Ruscus aculeatus will grow where almost nothing else will, nestling in dark, dry shade among dense tree roots. It grows very slowly, but it grows. And it is evergreen. The leaves, which are really flattened stems, are so tough and spiny they were used for scrubbing butchers' blocks, hence the common name of butcher's broom. Hermaphrodite forms, such as this, and females with a nearby mate, produce festive, red, shiny berries as big as marbles around Christmas, and the berries stay on for months. AGM.

Height 60cm.

Growing conditions Sun or shade, even dry shade. Any soil.

Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 7.

Origin Europe (including UK).

Season of interest November – April.



Eryngium deppeanum

If a plant could kick and bite and scratch, it would be *Eryngium deppeanum*. Reminiscent of some vicious sea creature with claws at the ready, each leaf is armed with double, forward-facing spines. Chainmail gloves would be useful for pulling out old leaves and flower spikes. Nonetheless I love it. In autumn it has clusters of tight, navy-blue flower heads, and its whorls of shiny, evergreen leaves look stylish all year. Coming from Mexico, it needs good drainage to survive an English winter.

Height 30cm (leaves), 60cm (flowers).

Growing conditions Sun, very good drainage, poor soil.

Hardiness USDA 7.

Origin Mexico.

Season of interest Year round.

Places to visit

Derry shares some of her favourite places to see plants at their best.

Bodnant Garden in the far corner of North Wales is one of the great British gardens. Gardened by five generations of keen plant collectors, it has 80 acres of unusual trees and shrubs, wonderful views of Snowdonia, and now a new Winter Garden. Tal-y-Cafn, Colwyn Bay LL28 5RE. Tel 01492 650460, nationaltrust.org.uk/bodnant-garden



Cambridge University Botanic Gardens is home to a rock garden and alpine house, both of which are wonderful places all year round. And while you're there, don't forget to walk the chronological bed – it's astonishing what we don't know about when plants were introduced. Even woad is not a British native. The winter garden is at its best from November to March,

Heptacodium miconioides

Discovered in China in 1908 but not introduced into cultivation until 1980, *Heptacodium* is a wonderful small tree or large shrub. It is beautiful every month of the year. In winter its peeling bark and elegant silhouette make it stand out. In spring the pairs of deeply veined leaves start to grow, eventually meeting at the tips to make a circle. The circles line up so you can run your arm up the branch through a series of bracelets. Clusters of fragrant, white flowers appear in September, followed by rosy bracts. Truly a tree for all seasons. AGM.

Height 4-8m.

Growing conditions Sun or light shade.

Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5.

Origin China.

Season of interest Year round.



Geranium pulchrum

An evergreen sub-shrub, which I grow as much for its leaves as for its flowers. The grey-green leaves are covered in fine, velvety hairs, becoming positively furry in winter when they look like they are covered in frost. The mauvey-pink flowers in summer are the icing on the cake. If it starts to look straggly in midsummer, cut it hard back and it will quickly re-cover itself in its handsome foliage. More tolerant of damp than most geraniums, it is hardy for me in all but the very hardest winters here in Wiltshire.

Height 50cm.

Growing conditions Sun.

Hardiness USDA 7a-9b.

Origin South Africa.

Season of interest Year round.



Pittosporum tenuifolium
'Tom Thumb'

A slow-growing evergreen shrub making a dense, compact mound of shining, purple-black foliage. Its naturally tidy habit makes it a good substitute for large box balls, if lightly clipped to shape in spring. The new leaves emerge pale, lime-green, astonishing against the old purple foliage. By June the whole plant is nearly black. The small leaves are shiny and wavy-edged, reflecting light at different angles. Not always hardy, but mine have survived our worst winters here against a south-facing wall. AGM.

Height 1m.

Growing conditions Sun.

Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 8.

Origin New Zealand.

Season of interest Year round.

full of ideas for winter interest in your own garden. 1 Brookside Avenue, Cambridge CB2 1JE. Tel 01223 336265, botanic.cam.ac.uk.

The Eden Project in Cornwall has become an all-year favourite. And when the weather turns wintry, what better place to be than a tropical biome? Like giant soap bubbles set in an old china clay quarry, the

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STEPHEN PRAGGON / ALAMY

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In mythology, quinces were reputed to be the golden apples that offered the promise of immortality. In today's reality, chefs prize their subtle taste and rose-like fragrance while kitchen gardeners like Jojo adore the way their bright yellow fruits light up an orchard in autumn

WORDS JOJO TULLOH ILLUSTRATIONS SARAH YOUNG

Picture this: the golden apples of the quince (*Cydonia oblonga*) lit by the sun against a clear blue sky – a fine ornament for any garden. Give me an empty plot and a quince is the first thing I would plant. They are good looking trees with large, single petal blossoms and bulbous fruit of a rich deep yellow covered in felty grey down. They are also relatively pest-free, self-pollinate and can live for more than a 100 years.

Picked unripe the fruit will perfume a room and in the past they were used to scent the linen closet. Despite its

unpromisingly hard and astringent taste when raw, once cooked the gastronomic possibilities are many and all of them superlative. One of the very best is quince jelly (see overleaf).

There is a quince tree planted at the heart of the new kitchen garden at Hampton Court Palace. The circular bench around the tree gives spring time visitors the chance to inhale the quince blossom's elusive scent. The lightly scented flowers give fleeting puffs of perfume, which only those who linger will catch. The quince is a

venerable tree, whose scent and fruits have been prized since antiquity.

Its Latin name may be a link to the fact that quinces were once called the apple of Kydonia or Cydonia, an ancient city in Crete now called Chania. In mythology, quinces are reputed to be the golden apples of Zeus that promised immortality and were guarded by the Hesperides (nymphs who tended a paradisiacal garden at edge of the world).

Although quinces have now largely fallen out of fashion as a fruit, they were once extremely popular. Cookbooks in the ▷

“Quince trees are traditionally planted by a stream or pond, which gives the added pleasure of seeing both blossom and fruit reflected in the water”

▷ 17th century had more recipes for quince than for any other orchard fruit. They are rich in pectin, making them popular for use in jellies and jams. The word marmalade was originally associated with the quince conserve marmelada, its name coming from the Portuguese word for quince, *marmelo*.

Ideally a quince tree likes heavy, fertile ground with its roots near water. It is traditionally planted by a stream or pond, which gives the added pleasure of seeing both blossom and fruit reflected in the water. When a damp site is not available, you can get round this by mulching your tree heavily. It should be planted in a warm and sunny spot, and in the north and Scotland it needs a wall behind it.

Cydonia oblonga ‘Lusitanica’, also known as ‘Portugal’, is a good tree for a southern garden being less hardy but with good flavoured fruit. It’s an ancient cultivar brought to Britain by John Tradescant in 1611 (but probably dating back much further). It ripens early, cooks down well and has a strong and fragrant flavour (quite sharp). ‘Champion’ has rounder, fuller, apple-shaped fruit that is easier to peel. It is vigorous and a prolific cropper. Two lesser-known cultivars, ‘Little Ickford Small’ (with a melting, mango-like texture when cooked) and ‘Little Ickford Pineapple’ with notes of quince, orange and pineapple, both hold interest as does ‘Meech’s Prolific’ (named for a quince loving American reverend) for its orange flavour, heavy cropping and large, white flowers. In cooler conditions I like the idea of ‘Vranja’ a Serbian cultivar that has very large, pear-shaped golden fruit and unusually has pink not white blossoms. It is hardier than ‘Lusitanica’, and not as sharp in flavour.

As an ingredient in jams and jellies, quinces are best used under ripe. Otherwise pick them when just ripe and let them mature on a shelf. Enjoy the scent for a little while but don’t let the fruit get cottony in texture (it won’t cook down so well).

- **Quince compote** A delicious and simple compote that makes an excellent addition to an apple pie. Peel and core 1kg of quinces then add the peelings to 300ml of water and 180g sugar to create a syrup. Strain the syrup and cook the sliced quinces in the strained syrup until they are soft.
- **Quince and chicken stew** Combine quinces with chicken to create a wonderful North African stew. Joint a chicken and fry it with onions, paprika, ginger and cinnamon, adding water to cover, along with lemon juice and honey. After 30 minutes, add the quinces and simmer for a further 30 minutes, until you have a rich sauce. Finish the dish by adding freshly chopped coriander.
- **Quince roasted in the embers** Food cooked in the ashes of a fire has a wonderful texture and a hint of smokiness. Try roasting quinces in the embers until the outside is charred and the interior soft. Scrape out the pulp, combine with a little butter, salt and pepper, and serve as a purée with game or chicken.
- **Quince ratafia** For an exquisite liqueur, grate two quinces (don’t peel or core) and pack down into a 1-litre preserving jar. Add 2tbsp of sugar and cover with brandy (you can use vodka or gin if you prefer). Leave for two months in a dark place, shake the jar occasionally. Strain the liquid into a clean bottle. □



Golden wonders

Sometimes you get gluts of quinces but if your harvest is poor you can use apples or a combination of apples and crab apples to make up the weight for this jelly recipe. Even a ratio of three apples to every quince will still result in a fine-flavour. This clear jelly has a rosy, amber-red appearance that sets well and can be eaten with game, turkey or roast lamb. It’s very good on the side with thick grilled cheese sandwiches made with sourdough bread. The chilli adds a good fiery glow on the tongue. Now all you need is a runcible spoon...

• QUINCE JELLY WITH CHILLI

**1.5kg of quinces (or apples and quinces),
2½ litres of water, 1 lemon, about 1kg of sugar
(measure one cup of juice to one cup of sugar),
5-6 dried red chilli peppers (optional).**

Halve and quarter the fruit, (leaving peel on and cores in). Add the juice of the lemon and pour over the water. Bring up to a simmer and cook very slowly until the quinces are very soft. Line a colander with muslin and pour in the quinces and their liquid. Gather up the fruit and tie up the bundle and suspend over a bowl until all the liquid has dripped through. Measure out the liquid and then return it to the pan with one cup (250ml) of unbleached granulated sugar for each cup of juice. Bring up to the boil and skim off froth. Add the dried chillies and simmer until the setting point is reached. Check this, by collecting some jelly in a wooden spoon let it cool slightly then tip it sideways (edge down). If the jelly hangs down and hesitates for a few seconds before dropping off, it is ready. Pour into sterilised jam jars.

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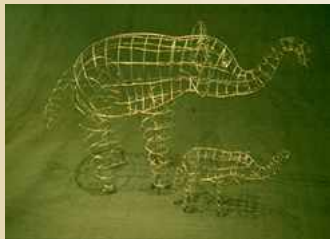
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Sarah Witts

As head gardener at National Trust Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire for just over a year, Sarah has had many challenges renovating areas originally created in the 19th century

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory I remember patrolling my grandad's vegetable garden armed with an old, wooden tennis racket and being told to swat any cabbage white butterflies on sight.

Life before gardening I trained as a GP before changing career in 2006. I'd become more and more interested in horticulture after purchasing my first house and completely re-developing the garden. Horticulture was a natural choice when I decided being a doctor wasn't for me.

Favourite garden I completed a two-year student placement at Ness Botanic Garden as part of my horticultural course. I just loved the varied garden areas, interesting plants and views across the Dee Estuary.

Three most worthwhile tips for every gardener Keep notes and pictures to help plan for subsequent years; spend time preparing the soil before planting; choose the right plant for the right place – not always easy to follow when you see a plant that really catches your eye.

Dream plant destination I've always wanted to visit South Africa including a visit to Kirstenbosch botanical gardens.

Who would you most like to have tea with in the garden? Roy Lancaster – I'd be fascinated to hear about his botanical travels.

Least favourite plant group Highly bred plants with double flowers and stumpy graceless foliage.

Unsung hero of the plant world *Luzula sylvatica*, a clump-forming rush. It's a very tough evergreen, tolerating a wide range of conditions, and its fibrous root system helps stabilise soils. Invaluable when gardening on steep slopes as we do at Quarry Bank.

Biggest challenge facing gardeners today I'm concerned about the number of pests and diseases that are becoming problematic.

What principles have guided your attitude to gardening For me gardening is about the pleasure people get from spending time in beautiful spaces and observing nature and the seasons. So my key guiding principle is to keep the garden interesting and beautiful and encourage people to enjoy it.

Favourite gardening blogs – or books? One of my favourite books is *The Hillier Manual of Trees and Shrubs*. I have annotated my copy over the years with comments about good specimens or cultivars that I have seen growing in gardens I've worked in or visited.

Contact sarah.witts@nationaltrust.org.uk

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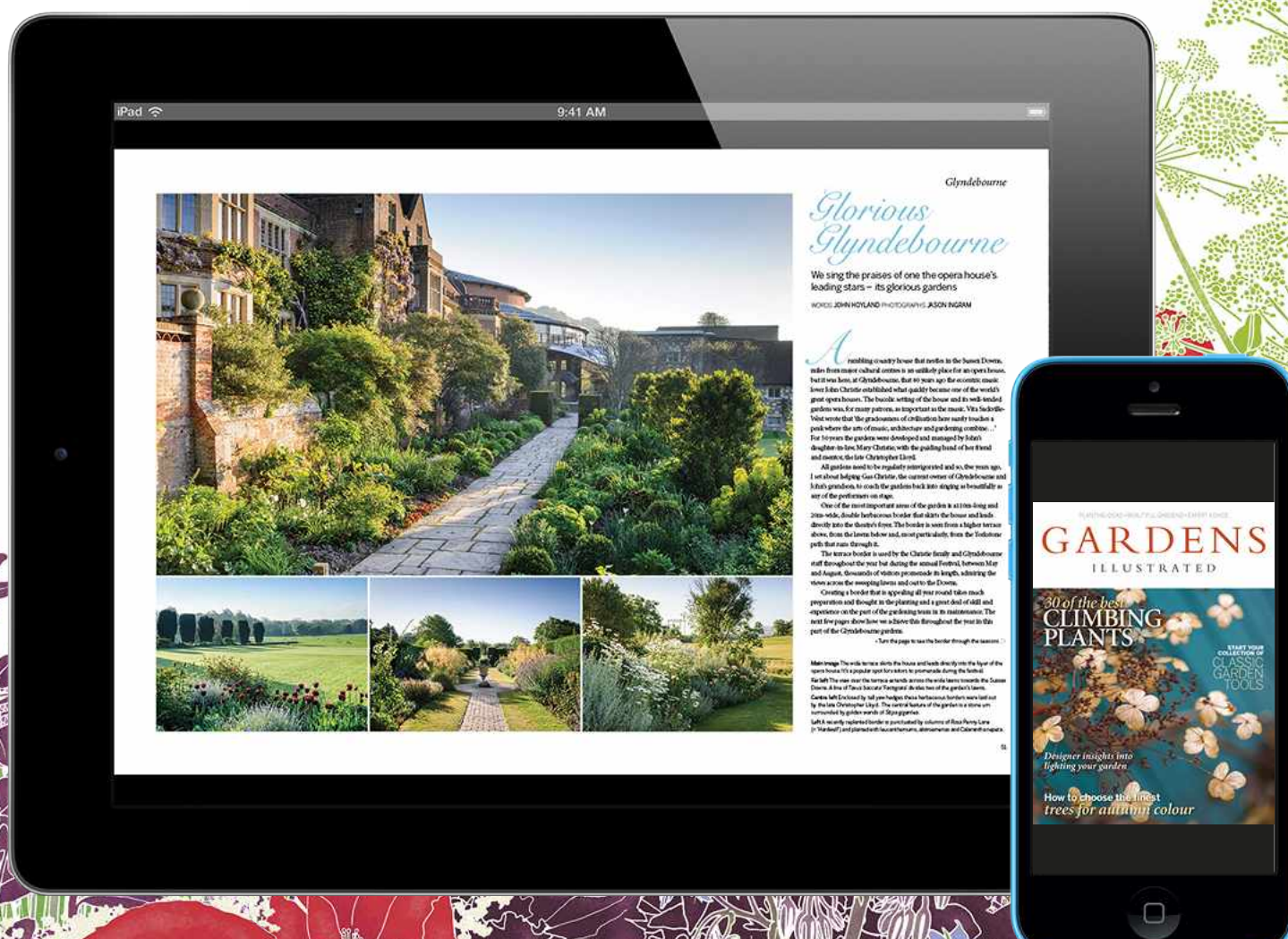


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The constant gardener

Christian Korsch has spent many hours turning the land around his German farmhouse into a stunning blend of formal and natural garden that sits beautifully within the landscape

WORDS INA SPERL PHOTOGRAPHS ANDRÉ REUTER

This lawn to the front of Christian's thatched farmhouse was once a cobblestone yard. Rhododendrons and balls of box provide structure alongside the faded blooms of *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle'.



In brief

What Domestic garden around former farmhouse in an isolated location.

Where Mecklenburg, northern Germany.

Points of interest A garden that aims to blend seamlessly with the surrounding landscape, including lots of trees and shrubs. Numerous historical roses.

Size Six acres.

Climate Moderately mild, continental.

Soil Heavy loam.

Hardiness rating USDA 6a-7b.

Christian dedicates many hours to perfecting his garden, even resorting to the use of a head torch as the days get shorter, just to make sure he gets all the work done before winter settles in

Even now, 17 years after he bought the restored farmhouse he calls home, Christian Korsch has to sometimes pinch himself when he steps out of his front door. “I still can’t believe I live in a place as beautiful as this,” he says. Christian’s 200-year-old farmhouse in the north German region of Mecklenburg enjoys glorious views of open fields and wide skies, but what really drew him to the house was the adjoining six acres of land. Here Christian has created the garden he’d always dreamed of; one that would blend beautifully with its landscape.

“Whatever I do, I try not to disturb the natural beauty of the place,” says Christian of his approach to gardening. This has meant leaving some parts of his garden without fences to blur boundaries and open out the views to the surrounding countryside – even though deer and wild boar occasionally stray into these areas and “mess up the lawn”.

The open, relaxed garden is very different to the one Christian inherited. When he and his partner Peter Kiel bought the farm in the 1990s there was only a small, ornamental garden, a kitchen garden and an orchard. At the front of the house a vast farmyard was partly paved with cobblestones that had become heavily compacted with soil. Today, those muddled cobblestones have been covered by a neat lawn, surrounded by stately trees and balls of neatly clipped box that give the garden a firm underlying framework, and perennials have taken root in the borders. Beneath a group of trees Christian has planted *Hydrangea arborescens* ‘Annabelle’ and *H. paniculata* ‘Limelight’ – “I just love how they shine in the shade and how the colour of ‘Limelight’ turns pink in autumn and then fades to green,” he says.

Meanwhile, the former kitchen garden is now home to around 30 chickens that roam freely under cherry trees and large bushes of *Rosa multiflora* ‘Greville’. Roses feature prominently in Christian’s garden. A double hedge of *Rosa canina* and *Rosa multiflora* shelters the garden from the strong, southwesterly wind, and several varieties of ramblers wind around a romantic pergola that covers one formal feature Christian was determined to include in his natural garden – a path edged on either side with low, box hedges and with perennials and roses behind. Although carefully clipped, the hedges fit in with Christian’s love of blurring boundaries by drawing your eye to the landscape beyond. Christian’s grandfather had a similar path in his garden that Christian can remember running up and down as a child.

It was his grandfather who inspired a love of gardening, and today Christian dedicates many hours to perfecting his garden, even resorting to the use of a head torch as the days get shorter just to make sure he gets all the work done before winter settles in.

His hard work has paid off, for the garden is spectacular. Near the house the garden is formal with well-kept borders filled with *Nepeta x faassenii*, several cultivars of *Hemerocallis* and *Sedum*. In autumn, as colours begin to fade, swathes of large *Miscanthus* grasses play a leading role. As do the many trees that Christian, a trained forester, has planted, alongside existing mature trees, shrubs and woodland plants. A number of rhododendrons now form large islands in his neatly trimmed lawn, echoing the copses of the surrounding landscape.

As you move further away from the house, nature is afforded a much freer hand. In a gravelled area, lupins now grow from seeds carried by ants from the borders, and Christian is happy with this new location. His attitude to weeds is similarly relaxed. Ground elder is allowed to stay in some outer borders and even bindweed is free to roam in limited places. “I edit, of course,” he says, “but it’s no use trying to fight nature in a big garden like this – I can never win.”

Perhaps his favourite part of the garden is the area where he interferes the least. In this ‘natural garden’ meadow grass is allowed to grow high, brambles spread, providing plenty of berries for those grazing animals that creep into the garden, and a group of 200-year-old uncoppiced willows line a large pond. At its edge there is just a narrow margin of nettles to divide the garden from the fields beyond, and Christian loves the fact that you can hardly tell where his garden ends. “Work with Mother Nature,” is Christian’s advice. “Give her an inch and she will give you back miles.” □

• **Turn over** to discover some of Christian’s tricks for blurring the boundaries between garden and nature, and six of his favourite autumn plants.

USEFUL INFORMATION

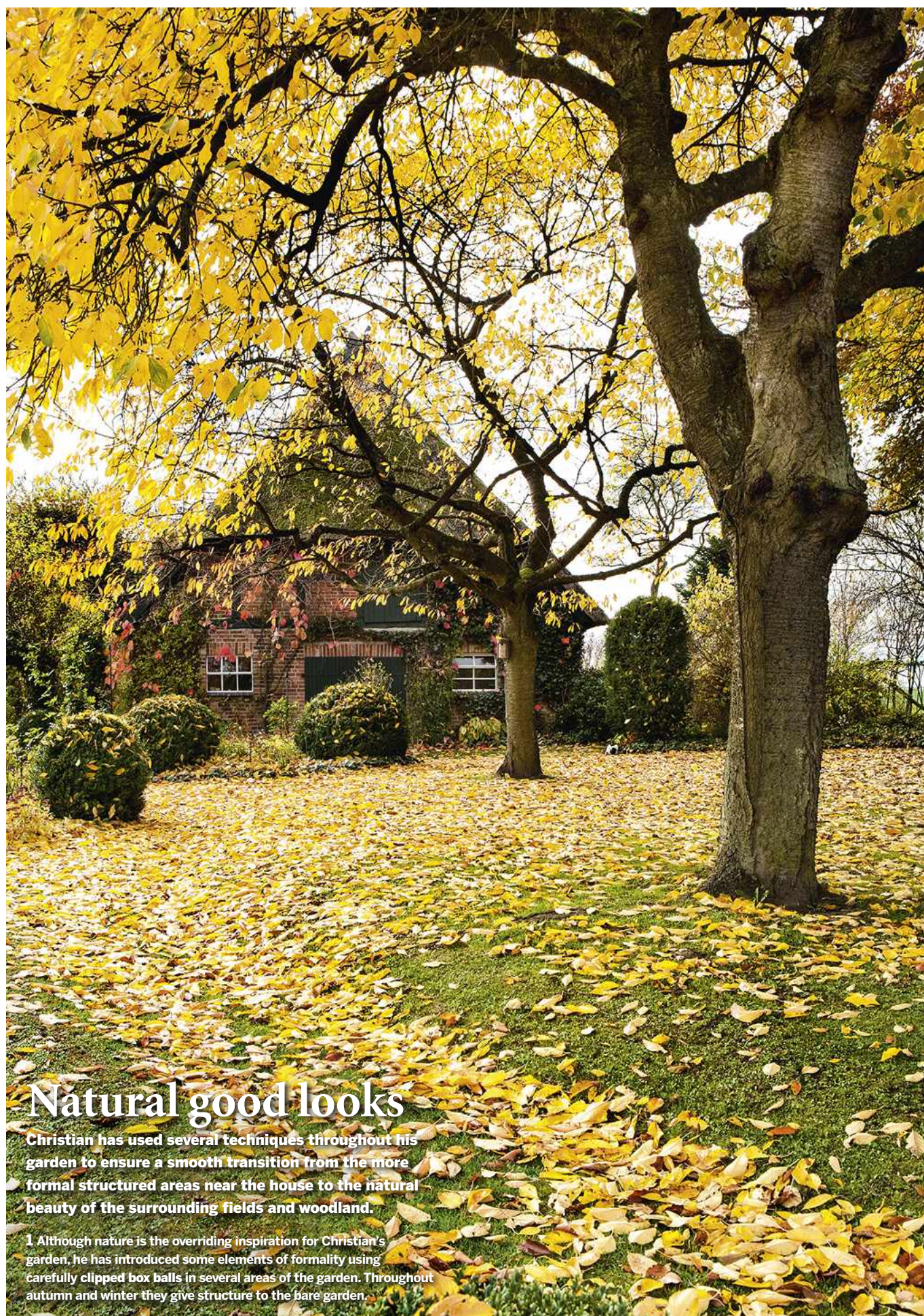
Address Neu Brützkow, Mecklenburg, **Tel** +49 38872 56299

Open By appointment only. Next garden tours June 2015.

Admission € 10.



Christian planted the *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King' near the house 16 years ago. In autumn, its dark-red leaves turn copper tones and provide a bright burst of colour when perennials begin to fade and hydrangeas turn brown.



Natural good looks

Christian has used several techniques throughout his garden to ensure a smooth transition from the more formal structured areas near the house to the natural beauty of the surrounding fields and woodland.

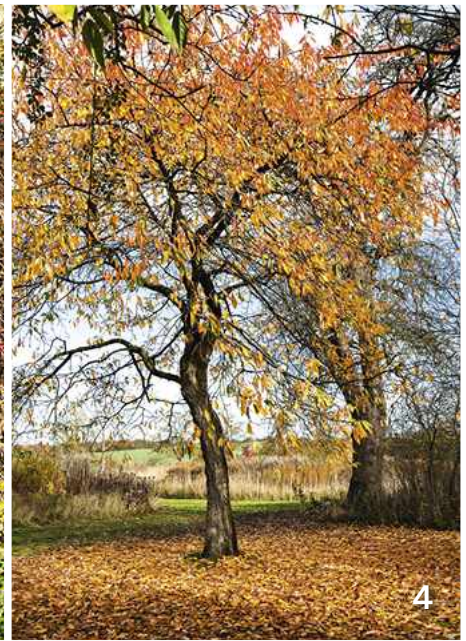
1 Although nature is the overriding inspiration for Christian's garden, he has introduced some elements of formality using carefully clipped box balls in several areas of the garden. Throughout autumn and winter they give structure to the bare garden.



2



3



4



5

2 This wonderfully romantic **covered passage**, connects the garden to the fields beyond.

3 **Rambling roses** and climbers create natural shelter for hidden seating and eating areas.

4 **Doing without fences** means Christian's garden blends seamlessly with the landscape.

5 **Wooden benches** wrapped around trees allow you to sit amid natural features.

6 **Climbers** are an important feature in the garden for creating a touch of romance.

7 Christian's **ivy-covered wall** links the house to the evergreen box and yew in the garden.

8 Rustic-looking **wooden gates and fences** work well amid surrounding trees.

9 **Box around fruit trees** stops deer nibbling climbers before they can get established.



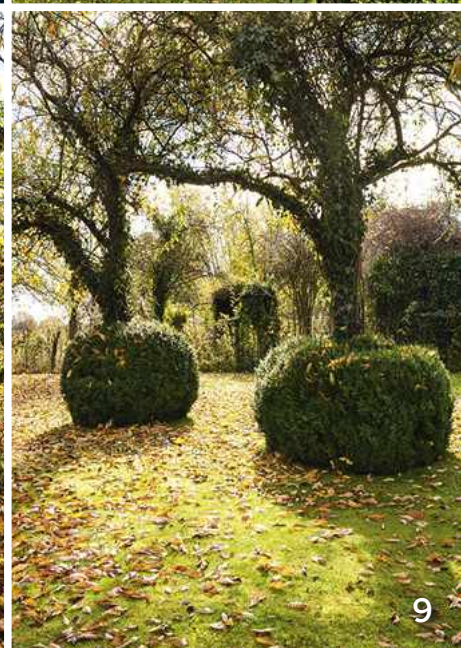
6



7



8



9

A photograph of a dense garden border in autumn. In the foreground, tall green grasses and white flower clusters are prominent. Behind them, a dark wooden fence is partially visible. The background is filled with trees and shrubs showing autumnal colors, including bright reds, oranges, and yellows. The sky is visible through the branches at the top.

In autumn, as colours begin to fade, swathes of large Miscanthus grasses play a leading role

In this exuberant natural border, pale *Eupatorium cannabinum* seedheads and tall, white plumes of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Silberfeder' stand out next to the autumnal foliage of a stag horn sumac (*Rhus typhina*) and red smoke tree (*Cotinus coggygria*).



6 of Christian's favourite autumn plants

1 *Euonymus europaeus*

A deciduous shrub that produces pale, yellow-green flowers in May, and bright pinkish-red fruit in autumn. Poisonous, especially the seeds. 3m. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b†.

2 *Solidago*

In summer this goldenrod provides racemes with masses of bright-yellow flowers. In late autumn these turn into fluffy white, seedheads. 1.2m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

3 *Physalis alkekengi* var. *franchetii*

Known, for obvious reasons, as the Chinese lantern plant, these bright-orange seedpods practically glow on autumn days. Likes moist soil, but spreads vigorously. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 2a-10b.

4 *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica'

A vigorous, easy shrub that provides colour in autumn with its red leaves, and again in winter with its bright red stems. Tolerant of wet soils. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

5 *Rosa canina*

Often found in hedgerows, so fits in well with Christian's natural planting. Produces red hips that look fabulous when combined with evergreens, such as ivy or box. 6m. RHS H7, USDA 3a.

6 *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight'

Its huge panicles open lime-green, then turn ivory-white, before finally ageing to dull pink and green. Best on more moist soils. 4m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.



*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



In brief

Name Kaza Hana.

What A small florist, café and design company almost entirely hidden by lush, vertical planting on a street corner.

Where Tokyo, Japan.

Points of interest Unusual use of planting in limited space.

Size Two storeys high, 1m wide.

Climate Almost frost-free winters, hot, humid summers.

Soil N/A, all grown in pots.

Hardiness rating USDA 9.

The garden around the corner

On a street corner in Tokyo designer Kazuyuki Ishihara has created a remarkable vertical garden around a tiny florist and café

WORDS NOËL KINGSBURY PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS

The sheer mass of planting – everything from agaves to ferns, maples to mosses – is staggering, and completely covers this Tokyo street corner.

An eclectic mass of shrubs, grasses, ferns and perennials flourish thanks to the combination of good drainage and an effective irrigation system.



Weathered, wooden shelves add to the quirkiness of this seemingly ad hoc assortment of potted plants.



Japan is crowded. Much of the population lives in an almost continuous urban sprawl that stretches along a narrow coastal strip from Tokyo southwards. Many people live in two-storey houses that are within a metre of their neighbours, and directly on the street. Those who wish to garden often have only the narrowest of strips, and frequently no soil. It comes as no surprise to find Japanese gardeners are masters of how to fit as much as possible into difficult spaces: trees, trained and pruned in the traditional *niwaki*-style, poke up among the rooftops, rows of pots are lined up on shelves and climbing plants extend the greenery upwards on wires.

Challenging environments in Japan have always brought out creativity in its designers. One of the most creative is Kazuyuki Ishihara, who has become well-known outside of Japan through the eight gardens he's designed for the Chelsea Flower Show. He's also the founder of the Garden World Cup, a competition held in his home city of Nagasaki, where garden designers from all over the world are invited to come and make gardens. His training was initially in *ikebana*, the traditional Japanese art of flower arranging, where the discipline of choosing and arranging small quantities of plant material is excellent training in how to make use of vertical space.

Next to his office in Tokyo's Minamiaoyama district, he's taken the art of vertical planting to a whole new level. On the corner is a small florist and café called Kaza Hana. At first sight



Boehmeria platanifolia
Fabulous for foliage, which looks very much like that of its relative the nettle.



***Farfugium japonicum* 'Aureomaculatum'**
Perennial with glossy, spotted leaves. Best in light shade.



Leucothoe fontanesiana
A shrub whose arching stems make it ideal for vertical planting. Needs acid soil.



***Carex morrowii* 'Variegata'**
A reliable sedge with fine tufts of semi-evergreen foliage. Dislikes strong sun.



Ajania pacifica
Elegant, evergreen perennial with a pleasing, bushy habit. A chrysanthemum relative.

it is hard to see doors or windows, let alone walls, so covered is it in vegetation. The 'planting', now six years old, uses a wide variety of methods, from the traditional pots on shelves and containers of water plants to hi-tech, vertical planting systems. It's watered through an automatic irrigation system that changes according to the time of year and the weather. On one occasion the system was destroyed by lightning, but now Ishihara-san has developed a communication system so that if there is any similar problem, an alert is sent straight to his mobile phone. "General tidying up, such as pruning, replanting and deadheading, is done by my staff," he says.

There's an incredible diversity of plants. Most are perennials from forest-floor habitats, such as ferns, sedges, *Heuchera* and *Tiarella*, but there are shrubs too, including a camellia and the mauve-flowered *Vitex agnus-castus*. Up close Kaza Hana looks like a green cliff of vegetation. There's also colour – "I aim to have flowers 365 days of the year," says Ishihara-san – but it is the variety of foliage that makes this street corner so enthralling. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Kaza Hana, 107-0062 Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo 3-9-1, Aburimu 1F, Japan.

Tel +81 3 6659 4093.

Website kaza-hana.jp



The richly coloured leaves of *Acer palmatum*, work wonderfully with the many shades of green.

Tips for vertical planting

- **Plant in layers.** Think woodland planting with the canopy of trees, understorey shrubs and a perennial ground layer. This threefold division works well in narrow plantings.
- **Avoid climbers.** These will fill vertical space but tend to ramble over and smother other plants – notice how there are no climbers at Kaza Hana. Shrubs are included but higher up, where they will not impede people walking past at ground level.
- The bulk of the planting should be made up of **evergreen perennials** with good quality foliage. These will provide interest all year round. Flowers should be seen as an added bonus.

A well-ordered tool store is a heart-warming sight for any gardener and nothing quite beats a collection of much-loved, vintage garden tools. Each tool has its own story, and years of use impart a charming patina that is virtually impossible to recreate.

At the beginning of the last century Britain was at the heart of tool manufacturing and the range produced by some of the great tool manufacturers, such as Edward Elwell, Brades and CT Skelton & Co, was extensive. Tools were often made for a specific purpose, or even for a specific person, so invariably they sit comfortably in the hand and are a pleasure to use. Take the humble spade, for example, which came in several widths and lengths, from small spades known as lad's spades, right through to the long-handled digging spade. Spades were also available with or without treads, strapped or shaped, and with handles to suit all preferences, including the T-handle, the D-handle and the split YD-handle. And that's even before we get on to the numerous spades made for a particular purpose – from rabbiting through to the digging clay. There were devices for straightening cucumbers, grading bulbs and dispensing seed. Whatever the gardening task, there was invariably a perfect tool to fit the purpose.

Seeking out tools that not only suit the task in hand but also the individual needs of the owner is a rewarding experience. Often the only way to do this is to find them second hand, and this selection of tools ranging from the early 19th century to the 1970s would make an excellent starting point for anyone wishing to start a classic tool collection.

Tools for the flower border

Antique tools often highlight the ingenuity of previous generations. This early 20th-century tool, known as the Little Gripper **flower picker (1)**, both cuts and grips flowers, allowing you to pick flowers in the back of the border with ease.

The classic design of some tools has never been bettered. This early 20th-century, Barr's pattern **bulb planter (2)**, is sturdy and strong and makes the planting of bulbs so much less of a challenge.

A tool that looks very familiar to us today is this **garden trowel (3)** made by Vaughan in the 1930s, which is both practical and sturdy.

Garden secateurs come in a multitude of different shapes and sizes. These distinctive Aubert's pattern **secateurs (4)** from the latter part of the 19th century sit in the hand beautifully.

A good, sturdy, **hand fork (5)** is an essential piece of kit for weeding. This example has been cast rather than pressed to make it stronger, while its traditional ash handle has been polished through many years of use, which has made the tool extremely good to hold.

Another useful tool is the **border spade (6)**. This smaller-sized spade is perfect for preparing a hole in a closely planted border.

Part of the attraction of old tools is their diversity. The small and rare **fern trowel (7)** from 1910, was in its day much prized by plant collectors and today is equally valued by collectors of vintage tools.

One of the most desirable of all classic garden tools, however, is the small **border fork (8)**. Originally known as a ladies fork, it is now much in demand by male and female gardeners alike.





Dig for history

Louise Allen, co-owner of vintage tool supplier Garden & Wood, shares her insights into classic tools that have stood the test of time

WORDS LOUISE ALLEN PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MONTGOMERY



Tools for the produce garden

Dibbers, the pointed tools used for creating holes for seed or bulbs, come in all shapes and sizes. They range from the long-handled, blacksmith-made **field dibber (1)**, which was once commonly used on Norfolk farms, to the more domestic, **T-handle dibber (2)** with its steel tip. Both tools make the job of planting leeks a joy.

Although it shares a name with the pair of tools above, the **dandee dibber (3)** is actually a weeding tool. Dating back to the 1930s. It was manufactured by the British company Ardinco.

One of the great pleasures of planting vegetables is watching them grow in a perfect, straight line. The best way to achieve such perfection is to use a **garden line (4)** or spinner. This particular example was made by a blacksmith in 1880 and is notable for its triangular spike.

To ensure a perfect vegetable plot you should also sow the correct amount of seed in each row. Over the years several tools have come along to make this job simpler, but this brass, Goodstart **seed spacer (5)** with adjustable holes for different-sized seed has to be one of the neater solutions.

It's also important that seed is planted at the correct depth and the Prestige **measuring trowel (6)**, with its curved, scaled blade, is perfect for the task. It takes its inspiration from the Victorian fern trowel (see previous page), and is equally desirable. It's often debatable at what point a tool can really be called a classic, but this simple tool from the 1960s, with its beautifully shaped handle, is such joy to hold and use it more than justifies that description.

Another beautifully simple tool is this French **harvesting hook (7)** with a curved serrated edge and polished bone handle. After all the hard work that goes into growing your vegetables you really need to choose the perfect tool to harvest all your bounty.

When it comes to harvesting, some vegetables demand a specific tool, and asparagus is one such example. This long-handled, English **asparagus knife (8)** with a serrated edge is just the tool for the job.

Weeding can be tricky in closely planted borders, but over the years several tools have been developed to make life easier. This **weeder (9)**, with its two-pronged head, is ideal for pulling up pesky roots. Like the dandee dibber (above) it was made in the 1930s by Ardinco.

French tools are often ornate in design, such as this intricately manufactured, funnelled **apple-picking crown (10)** from the 1950s, which is a perfect example of how to harvest in style.

Keeping rows of vegetables weed free has long been a challenge for gardeners and tool designers alike. The hand-held **onion hoe (11)** is perfect for this task.

Small, hand-held spades were frequently used in large market gardens in Lincolnshire, where they were referred to as cabbage planting spades. Somehow the alternative name of **strawberry planting spade (12)**, makes this lovely, little T-handled spade all the more appealing.

Another stylish tool from France is this comb-like **berry harvester (13)**. Perfect for pulling currants and gooseberries from the bush.



Tools for lawns and hedges

The early part of the 20th century saw the arrival of mechanisation in garden tools, such as the All Britisher Little Wonder **hedge trimmer (1)**. It may look primitive compared with today's power tools, but when it was introduced, this rotary trimmer, which needed two men to operate it, was seen as a real labour saver.

The Edwardians were also keen on labour-saving devices and passionate about keeping their lawns free of weeds. This clever **gentlemen's corkscrew weeder (2)** from 1910, made by Cornelius Whitehouse, was designed for laying waste to annoying dandelions.

The **daisy grubber (3)** is another solution for weed-free lawns, although this tool has only the humble daisy in its sights.

To add a crisp, sharp edge to your immaculate weed-free lawn, the **half moon lawn edging iron (4)**, from the 1950s, has long been a must.

Another must, if you wanted immaculate stripes to go with that crisp edge, was the **cylinder lawnmower (5)**. The first lawnmower was invented by Edwin Budding in 1827, but this one, manufactured by JP Super, dates from the 1920s. It was an instant success despite its relatively high price tag.

Just as important as the perfect lawn is the well-kept hedge. Traditional **hedge shears (6)**, such as these from the 1960s, have earned a place in many a well-stocked tool shed and often come up for sale. Many are still perfectly suitable for use today.

Some tools, however, are probably only for collectors and not for the more practical gardener. This pair of Trenton **hedging shears (7)**, was made in the USA in 1919, and has very delicate teeth.

Many gardeners over the years have favoured **sheep shears (8)** for trimming hedges. They are perfect for creating topiary.

The extended handle and sharp pointed edges of this 1930s **turf-lifting iron (9)** make this still the perfect tool for lifting small amounts of turf.

Starting a collection

If you like the idea of adding classic and vintage tools to your collection – and you have the time and inclination to spend your weekends visiting flea markets, car boot sales and auctions – you can still find many unrestored garden tools in need of a home. Make sure you check first they're in good condition. Woodworm can be the death of even the most beautiful of tools so look out for those tell-tale holes and be prepared to replace handles if need be. Alternatively, take a look at the suppliers below, who have beautiful, well-restored tools for sale:

Cranborne Antiques

Tel 07785 336574, cranborneantiques.co.uk

Garden & Wood

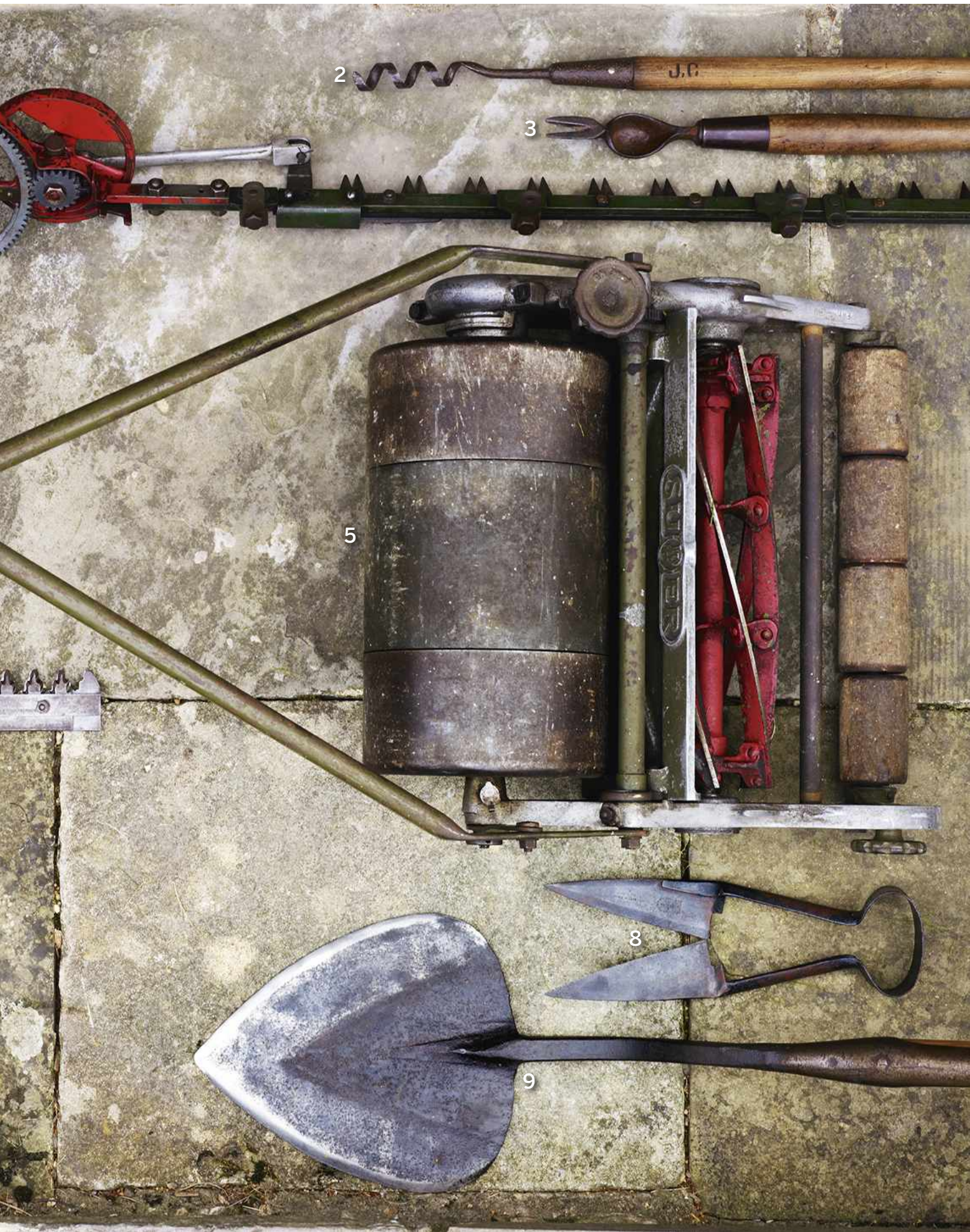
Tel 01844 279170, gardenandwood.co.uk

Timeless Tools

Tel 0794 1431018, timelesstools.co.uk

• To find more about vintage garden tools visit the collection at Waterperry Gardens in Oxfordshire, waterperrygardens.co.uk





In brief

Name Athelhampton House.

What A 15th-century manor house surrounded by one of England's finest architectural gardens, designed by Inigo Thomas in 1891.

Where Near Dorchester, Dorset.

Points of interest The Great Court with 12 mighty pyramid yews; the Lime Walk.

Size 20 acres.

Climate Normally mild, but garden has suffered from recent succession of bad winters.

Soil Neutral but good.

Hardiness rating USDA 8a-9b.

A tall *Cedrus libani* hangs over the entrance to the Corana Court, a pivotal garden that links the Great Court to the Private Garden. Elizabethan in style, the Corana Court takes its name from the crown-shaped Hamstone parapet of slender obelisks and curves, which stand out against a backdrop of clipped yew.

historic garden



Left The sunken lily pool in the Private Garden reflects the east wing of the house in its clear waters.

Below The skeletal remains of *Solidago* add an extra layer of winter structure to the garden.

Bottom The Great Terrace with steps leading up to the Great Court. Two stone pavilions sit at either end of the terrace. This one, known as the House of Sorrow and Winter, features a tortured face surrounded by icicles carved over the door, while its sunnier companion, the House of Summer and Joy, sports a smiling face.



Cold comfort

Visit a garden in winter and you'll be able to judge its true character. Athelhampton in Dorset reveals itself a master

WORDS CAMILLA SWIFT PHOTOGRAPHS CRAIG FORDHAM





This image A raised walkway offers panoramic views across the Great Court and out to parkland beyond.

Top left Punctuated by mature trees, the Yew Walk runs from the River Piddle to a 16th-century dovecote.

Left *Cotinus coggygria* provides beautiful autumn colour, the veins seemingly etched into the leaf.

In the words of the acclaimed garden designer and landscape architect Jacques Wirtz: 'If a garden is not beautiful in winter, it is not a beautiful garden.' Winter is the perfect time to appreciate a garden's bones, for good gardens – like great beauties – have great bone structure, and few gardens have better bones than Athelhampton House.

Described by the *Pevsner Architectural Guides* as a 'beau ideal of the late medieval manor', Athelhampton in Dorset was bought in 1891 by the splendidly named Alfred Cart de Lafontaine. He commissioned the architect and landscape designer Inigo Thomas to create a 20-acre Italianate garden; a series of formal garden rooms, or courts, where exquisite architecture makes flowers seem almost redundant. Wrought iron gates flanked with decorative stone piers lead to vistas with statues, a formal canal and fountains dancing over lily pools.

In 1957 Athelhampton was sold to the Cooke family, which for three generations has continued to restore and improve the house. The current owner, Patrick Cooke, was born there, and lives there still with

his wife Andrea and two young sons. Under their stewardship, Athelhampton has moved into the 21st century with style and grace.

Over the past 16 years Andrea has taken charge of the gardens, replanting and redesigning the borders with an imaginative use of theme and colour, cleverly achieving what the garden writer Patrick Taylor described as 'the triumphant reconciliation of two consuming passions in British gardening — a love of plants and of classical order'.

It was, she admits, daunting at first. Her plant knowledge was slight but "once I've used a plant it's committed to memory, tucked safely away in a portfolio in my brain," she says. A trained artist, Andrea learned about plant combinations through picking flowers for the house, using her painter's eye to look at the canvas as a whole, weaving colours through so they work together. She experimented first with a tiny part of the kitchen garden and went on from there.

For Andrea, gardening is a project of constant restoration. "I paint a room in the house, it's done," she says. "I plant a room in the garden. ▶





Above The last few fruits of *Citrus trifoliata* add interest to bare branches. This is a garden where in late autumn and winter you should look up as much as you look down.

Right A wisteria dating from the 1950s obscures the door to the former kitchen garden creating a frisson of mystery. It was planted by the horticulturist Sir Harold Hillier who advised Patrick's father on additions to the garden.



▷ and I'm always going back, rethinking, fine-tuning." Gardens are about "fleeting moments of perfection and happy accidents", she says and she's not frightened of grasping the opportunity for either. "A plant, however beautiful, won't work if it's not in the right place."

Garden designer, Fiona Henley, has provided much help and support, while Patrick, in charge of hedge cutting, pipe-laying and "anything to do with diggers", is also fantastically supportive. Occasionally the couple quibble over the conflict between practicality and beauty, but, Andrea says firmly, "beauty, must always come first".

She revels in the vivid colours and soft planting of summer. Yet winter shapes and silhouettes, shadows sharpened and elongated in the lowering sun, and fading sepia plants gently withdrawing to reveal structure, are arguably more in keeping with Inigo Thomas's original vision.

Against a backdrop of dark yew, blackened against a washed white winter sky, glow glossy leaved *Bergenia*, *Fatsia* and *Choisya*. Scalloped edges of faded mauve *Heuchera* march beneath bruised red potentilla. Skeletal *Perovskia* and feverfew, and frost-dipped, bobble-headed *Echinops* tremble in the winter breeze.

Inevitably the needs of house jostle with those of the garden, so projects occasionally have to be reined and stored in "the follies book". But there is more to come. A new copse, of cherry trees perhaps. The

kitchen garden. Oh, and some gravel beds, if Andrea can prevent them from being raked over by a brilliant but tidy gardening team who can occasionally over manicure the terraces and conscientiously strip fountains of ancient, artfully draped mosses and ferns.

"Nature," Andrea acknowledges, "could rapidly reclaim the planting, but, in a garden like this, the structure is here to stay." That structure is what Andrea loves most about Athelhampton. "The feel of the place, that magical, subliminal connection to another time. An ethereal mystery, that's greater than us all," she says.

Athelhampton House is famously haunted. But even without ghosts, the gardens in winter are hauntingly beautiful. Go visit. □

• **Turn over** for ideas from Athelhampton on creating winter style.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Athelhampton House and Gardens, Athelhampton, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7LG.

Tel 01305 848363.

Website athelhampton.co.uk

Open 1 March – 31 October, Sunday-Thursday, 10.30am-5pm.

1 November – end February, Sundays only, 10.30am – dusk.

Avenue of pollarded limes

In a garden renowned for its built structure this long avenue of pollarded limes, is a joyous sight. It was created by head gardener Mark Eavis, who was originally confronted with ten-year-old branches that hung so low to the ground they obscured the view from one end of the avenue to the other. He started by propping them up using a combination of rope, broom handles and "odd bits of metal" and then spent a fortnight every winter, intricately weaving the stems until finally they took shape. At this time of year a black tracery of arching branches, all the more striking as the leaves drop, looms mysteriously against the late autumn sky. These days Mark simply cuts them back. But not before a crimson haze of new shoots runs like firecrackers the length of the avenue. It's an astonishing sight. The props are all finally gone and the shape is holding. So, is Mark happy with the result? "Yes," he says. "But bits of metal still occasionally fly out from the oddest places."



Elements of style

Athelhampton's charm is a combination of structure, plants, water, and shapes and silhouettes all working in perfect harmony.

1 The Great Court

The largest of the formal gardens or courts is also known as the Pyramid Garden on account of the 12 giant yew pyramids, now more than 9m tall, which loom dramatically over a raised walk with stone balustrades and a bookend pair of romantic pavilions. Originally, the pyramids were planted to punctuate a series of Edwardian rose beds. The roses are now long gone leaving the yew pyramids to dominate the garden, providing structure and framing the gables of the house behind.

2 Queen Victoria

The stern and solid statue, a retirement gift to Patrick's grandfather, stands at one end of the Lime Walk. Every year Andrea submits the statue to a thorough jetwash to maintain her whiteness.

3 Octagonal Cloister Garden

Created in 1971 by Patrick's father, the politician Sir Robert Cooke, this garden with an octagonal pond surrounded by pleached limes inspired the later design for the centre of New Palace Yard, Westminster.

4 The Dovecote

On the other side of the house from the Great Court is an early 16th-century, circular dovecote, which was fully restored in 1971. The new oak, hammerbeam roof covers a cedar lantern with landing stages for 40 doves.

5 The Sunken Lily Pond

The pond, in what's known as the Private Garden, runs straight from the east front of the house, reflecting both the architecture and the ancient *Cedrus libani*. Its curved ends were inspired by the roof of Athelhampton's Great Hall.

6 The Corona Fountain

This charmingly askew lead fountain, in the style of William Kent, is dressed with moss and ferns, and sits in a circle of grass recently restored after 30 years. Andrea designed the planting scheme in 2002 using a mix of red and purple plants intended to complement the crown shape of the Hamstone wall that gives the garden its name.

7 Main Gate

The simple metal gates, set within a stone wall, announce the formal tone for the garden.

historic garden





Climbing plants

Why restrict colour and foliage to borders when some of the most glorious plants will happily scramble over walls and trellises?

WORDS RORY DUSOIR

In brief

What Climbing plants for a variety of garden situations.

Origins Climbing plants have evolved independently across a large number of genera worldwide.

Season These are climbers for every season, from the cheerful winter flowering of *Jasminum nudiflorum*, to the high point of rambling roses in midsummer and then the stunning autumn foliage of *Vitis coignetiae*.

Conditions A climber can be found to suit any aspect.



Rory Duso

is a Kew-trained freelance gardener, designer and writer. Until recently he was head gardener at Stud House in Surrey.

Climbing plants all share the successful strategy of relying on the support of other plants or objects to reach the sunlight. This obviates the need to invest much in producing supportive tissue, such as the wood in trees, and means climbers aren't subject to the usual restraints on growth. By planting them we bring a mercurial, buccaneering spirit into our gardens. Of course, luxuriant growth brings its own problems – vigour must be matched carefully to the appropriate space and abundance restrained where necessary.

It's important to distinguish between those climbers, whether deciduous or evergreen, that will solidly clothe a wall, and those that offer fitful coverage at most. I would only ever plant a wisteria, for instance, on a handsome wall; throughout the winter a well-trained wisteria is little more than a sparse collection of twigs, and even during its peak flowering season, the wall will still be an important part of the picture. *Lonicera japonica* is an evergreen climber, but not one you'd want to look at in winter. By contrast, *Trachelospermum jasminoides* is as neat and solid an evergreen as you could wish for, with the considerable bonus of deliciously scented flowers throughout the summer.

The ability to 'self-cling' is another highly desirable quality in a wall climber. No need for wire, drills and vine eyes. But on a house it's best to let climbers grow only to a height to which you (or your proxy) are prepared to climb. Ivy has a bad reputation, but I would never sniff at it. It does the job of clothing walls in any situation admirably – allowing you the luxury of experimenting with flimsy, colourful subjects such as *Lonicera x tellmanniana*, using the ivy as both support and a glossy, dark green backdrop.

Climbing plants can also bring an exciting dynamism to flower borders, but the trick is to ensure that their vigour is matched to the situation. Not all climbers are rampant lianas. A memorable illustration of this ▷

PARTHENOCISSUS HENRYANA

See page 60 for details.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.

†Hardiness ratings given where available.

CAROL CASSELDEN / GAP PHOTOS; RORY DUSOIR: PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

▷ was the use of *Ipomoea lobata* (see page 62) in Great Dixter's exotic garden, using as its host the slender stems of *Verbena bonariensis*. Its sparse, architectural form makes the ideal frame for something so delicate. There are a number of other climbing plants that can be grown as annuals and used to pep up a border's late season. Morning glory (*Ipomoea tricolor*) is considerably more vigorous and can be encouraged to ramble over shrubs, such as lilacs, which offer very little by themselves later in the year. The most rampant of all 'annual' climbers (for the most they are tender perennials being grown as annuals) is the cup-and-saucer vine *Cobaea scandens* (see below right).

In general, the best clematis to use in a border situation are those that you can prune back hard every winter/spring. If you have found that a host has been smothered to its detriment one year, you can reset things with the annual prune and resolve to train fewer stems of the clematis over it the next. A good trick is to provide a tall stake for the climber to run up. This requires assiduous weekly tying in to be really successful. Clothing the pole will absorb most of the plant's vigour and you can then allow it to make innocuous, decorative incursions on to its neighbours.

If you are lucky enough to have the space, try to find a situation where one of the really vigorous climbers can be given free rein. There can hardly be a more uplifting sight than a rambling rose in voluminous full flower. They can be trained loosely over walls, as long as there is plenty of space around them. You can maintain a degree of control over the really vigorous rambling roses by removing all the previous year's flowered wood and tying all the arching new shoots down in winter (best to do it when your hands are too cold to feel pain). The plant will recover its look of ebullience and freedom by the time it is in flower.

Best of all, though, is to encourage a rambler to hoist itself into the crown of a mature tree. This must be a large, vigorous tree, or something you don't care about too much. If you are ever forced to intervene, blood will be spilt and you will curse your profligacy in allowing such a rampant spirit free rein. But next time it flowers, all will be forgiven.

• Rory's recommendations for climbing plants continue over the next six pages.

Climbers for walls



PILEOSTEGIA VIBURNOIDES

Self-clinging, evergreen and shade tolerant with frothy white flowers in late summer. Has a slow rate of growth, but this makes it less work to restrain once established. 6m. USDA 8a-10b.



HEDERA ALGERIENSIS 'GLOIRE DE MARENGO'

Good for lighting up dark walls without any fuss. A vigorous, self-clinging, adaptable plant, with smart, glossy leaves tinged with white. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.



PARTHENOCISSUS HENRYANA

Native to China, this Virginia creeper has tastefully variegated leaves that turn vibrant shades of red in the autumn. It self-clings and will tolerate the shade of a north-facing wall. 4.7m. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



LONICERA X TELLMANNIANA

A honeysuckle lacking scent, but abundant, vivid-orange flowers offer excitement enough. Tolerates shade and may be pruned by removing flowered growth annually. 4.7m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7b-10b.

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JOHN RICHMOND / ALAMY; ANDREW LAWSON / THE GARDEN COLLECTION; MBP-PLANTS / ALAMY; CHRIS STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY / ALAMY



**HYDRANGEA ANOMALA
SUBSP. PETIOLARIS**

Deciduous, but in season it completely clothes its space with large, green leaves and white, lace-cap inflorescences. Will cover a shady wall fast. 12m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-7b.



JASMINUM NUDIFLORUM

Can be persuaded to adopt the semblance of a climber by training and cutting back immediately after flowering. If allowed some freedom, it will flower abundantly in winter and early spring. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



TRACHELOSPERMUM JASMINOIDES

The scent of 'false jasmine' is not that similar to true jasmine, but equally powerful. Quite hardy, although the similar *Trachelospermum asiaticum* is said to be hardier. Best on a sunny wall. 12m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8a-11.



COBAEA SCANDENS

The most vigorous of all annual climbers, and perennial in a frost-free climate. In one year, from seed, it can cover an astonishing area with bell-shaped flowers from late summer to first frosts. 1.8m. AGM. RHS H2, USDA 9a-10b.



SCHIZOPHRAGMA INTEGRIFOLIUM

Similar to *Hydrangea anomala* (above left), although you will need more patience. It's distinguished by the shape and size of the sterile florets that encircle the inflorescence. 6m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.



ACTINIDIA KOLOMIKTA

An extraordinary relative of the kiwi. Its leaves appear to have been dipped in white paint then spray-painted bubble-gum pink. Said to require full sun, but this doesn't appear to be quite true. 9m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

Climbers for borders



***IPOMOEA TRICOLOR* 'HEAVENLY BLUE'**

Perennial in a Mediterranean climate, it can achieve sufficient bulk here to make its presence felt from a late April sowing, without causing too much of a nuisance. Will flower until frost cuts it down. 3m. AGM. RHS H1c.



TROPAEOLUM SPECIOSUM

A perennial nasturtium that needs acid soil and prefers a cool summer. It's herbaceous, arising from tubers and will run when happy. Works well among evergreen shrubs, such as camellias. 3m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.



IPOMOEA LOBATA

An intriguing member of the bindweed family, with flowers that are simultaneously an intense orange and yellow in the early bud stage, maturing to cream. Sow in late April and plant after all danger of frost. 3m.



IPOMOEA COCCINEA

Delicate in growth with striking scarlet flowers, this true annual is rarely seen and deserves to be grown more frequently. Straightforward from seed sown in late April and then planted out after all risk of frost is over. 6m.



***SOLANUM LAXUM* 'ALBUM'**

A twining climber with abundant clusters of flowers that look fragile and fresh right up to the first frosts. Trim lateral branches to around 15cm in winter. On the tender side, so site carefully. 6m. AGM.



RHODOCHITON ATROSANGUINEUS

Produces beautiful flowers along the length of its twining stems, and looks effective growing along horizontal twigs or branches. Can be sown late April, or August and overwintered frost free. 2.5m AGM. RHS H2.

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PAUL DEBOIS / GAPPHOTOS; ANDREA JONES / GARDENWORLD IMAGES; JULIA GAVIN / ALAMY; GRAHAM STRONG / GAPPHOTOS; JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAPPHOTOS; STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO / ALAMY



CLEMATIS 'PRINCE CHARLES'

A prolific blue-flowered clematis, similar to Sissinghurst's 'Perle d'Azur' but with slightly smaller flowers and improved resistance to powdery mildew. Cut back hard in spring and watch it go. 2.4m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.



BOMAREA MULTIFLORA

Twining herbaceous climber, a relative of *Alstroemeria*, that arises from a tuber. May come through the winter protected by a thick mulch. Something this gorgeous deserves some effort. 6m. AGM. USDA 10a-11.



LAPAGERIA ROSEA

Achingly beautiful, but requires shade, shelter, good drainage (yet plentiful summer moisture), is slow to establish and an apparently ambrosial beacon for slugs. 7m. AGM. RHS H3, USDA 9b-11.



CLEMATIS 'FRANCES RIVIS'

A good early flowering clematis with nodding flowers of great charm in spring. Works well in partial, deciduous shade as part of a woodland scheme. Prune lightly after flowering, if at all. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4b-9a.

Climbers on house walls

There is a widely held belief that self-clinging climbers, in particular ivy, can cause damage to the walls of your house and garden. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that ivy poses a threat to sound masonry. Moreover, research conducted by Oxford University on behalf of English Heritage found that a good covering of ivy can offer some benefits to the fabric of old buildings. As a thermal screen it buffers extremes of temperature at the surface of the building and also diminishes the detrimental effect of pollution. However, while self-clinging climbers do not require training or wires, they still need management. Things to consider:

- Climbers should be kept clear of any fixtures and fittings such as windows, gutters, roofs, soffits etc. These should be checked and cleared annually. For this reason, do not let self-clinging climbers grow too high to be feasibly reached for maintenance.
- Any existing fissures or cracks in masonry may be widened by ivy if it's allowed to colonise. A covering of ivy may also mask the development of structural issues in a wall as they occur, so make sure that your masonry is sound and re-point if necessary.
- Climbers can increase the wind stress on a structure. This is particularly a problem when ivy is allowed to top a garden wall. Once it reaches the top of a structure and can climb no more, ivy produces shrubby, flowering growth that can become quite substantial. This should be trimmed back annually after flowering – ivy flowers offer a good late nectar source for bees.
- There is a theory that climbers can cause damp in house walls by slowing down the drying process after rain. However, research also suggests that climbers can have a drying effect and prevent moisture getting in. If you are concerned, keep southwest facing walls clear as these are likely to be the most adversely affected.
- Large, established climbers may pose a risk to a wall, so speak to a chartered surveyor who can tell you whether the roots are affecting the foundations.

Further reading

Clematis by Christopher Lloyd
(Harper Collins 1977)

Many developments in clematis breeding have taken place since this was published, but a lively guide to using clematis in your garden nonetheless – and a good summary of the old stalwarts, many of which are still going strong.

Climbing Roses Old and New

by Graham Stuart Thomas
(Littlehampton Book Services Ltd 1978)

Now out of print, but you can find it embedded in Stuart Thomas's comprehensive *The Graham Stuart Thomas Rose Book* (John Murray, 1994). A must-have.

Where to see and buy

Tynings Nursery specialises in climbers and has an extensive list, including a number of tender species. Great Dixter Nursery specialises in clematis and supplies many other climbers that can be seen used to great effect in the gardens.

• Burncoose Nurseries

Gwennap, Redruth,
Cornwall TR16 6BJ.
Tel 01209 860316, burncoose.co.uk

• Great Dixter

Northiam Rye, East
Sussex TN31 6PH.
Tel 01797 252878, greatdixter.co.uk

• Penwood Nurseries

The Drove, Penwood, Newbury,
Berkshire RG20 9EW.
Tel 01635 254366,
penwoodnurseries.co.uk

• RHS Garden Wisley

Wisley Plant Centre,
Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB.
Tel 0845 060 9800,
rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley

• Tynings Climbers

109 Clevedon Road, Tickenham,
North Somerset BS21 6RE.
Tel 07812 134849,
tyningsclimbers.co.uk

Vigorous scramblers



CLEMATIS 'ALBA LUXURIANS'

One of the most vigorous of the *viticella* cultivars. Cut back hard every spring, you'll be amazed at the coverage you get over the course of one season. Flowers profusely July to September. 3.6m. USDA 3a-9b.



ROSA 'THE GARLAND'

Trained to cover an archway, this rose has always been the most arresting sight in the garden where I've been working for the past four years. Now it's happily rambling on to a neighbouring yew tree. 7m.



ROSA 'WEDDING DAY'

Flowers have the agreeable quality of changing colour as they mature, from pale primrose to almost white. The different stages appear side by side in each many-headed inflorescence. 9m. USDA 7a-9b.



WISTERIA FLORIBUNDA 'ALBA'

Often grown in spur-pruned tiers on a wall, although if you allow it the freedom to romp into trees, it will seek out the sunshine to flower well, and assume something of its natural character. 12m. USDA 5a-10b.



CLEMATIS 'BILL MACKENZIE'

A tough, vigorous, clematis, offering both striking flowers and seedheads over a long period. It's tolerant of drought and extreme cold, but does best in full sun. 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5b-9b.



LONICERA PERICLYMENUM 'SEROTINA'

Honeysuckle, with vivid colouring and a long flowering season. A vigorous and at times untidy grower; it can be kept within bounds by carefully removing flowered shoots in winter. 6m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.



ROSA 'CHEVY CHASE'

A rambling rose with a touch of opulence. The flowers are small double and crimson, with tightly clustered petals. Great in combination with the dark, glossy leaves of a mature holly, which makes a suitable host. 7m. USDA 5a-9b.



VITIS COIGNETIAE

A vine in the more precise sense of the word: a close relative of the grape. Grown for its large leaves, which turn spectacular colours in autumn. A wonderful way to enliven evergreen trees. 12m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.



ROSA 'PAUL'S HIMALAYAN MUSK'

Vigorous rambling rose, with delicate flowers. Perfect for hoisting up a large tree. Will take time to establish itself, but once it does you will be rewarded with grace, scent and a profusion of flowers. 9m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.



CLEMATIS MONTANA VAR. GRANDIFLORA

Well known for its extraordinary vigour, which makes it difficult to contain. Its stemmy growth can look rather untidy, especially in the winter. All will be forgiven when it flowers. 12m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARK BOLTON / GAP PHOTOS; JOHN GLOVER / GAP PHOTOS; HOWARD RICE / GAP PHOTOS; LOCATION: KATHY BROWN'S GARDEN, THE MANOR HOUSE, STEVINGTON; JULIETTE WADE / GAP PHOTOS; JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS; JAN SMITH / GAP PHOTOS

Nick Macer

The nurseryman and self-confessed plant geek on his passion for trees and woody plants, his fondness for funky and why forsythia will never light his fire

WORDS CAMILLA SWIFT PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Nick Macer has the comfortably rumped, laid back air of a man happy in his work, of a life spent idyllically out of doors. Contented possibly but laid back he profoundly is not. This is a man totally consumed by his passion for plants; an unapologetic, self-proclaimed plant nerd. “I’ve got no problem with being a nerd, although I’m glad it’s plants not matches,” he says with the piercing intensity, and infectious enthusiasm of a man truly obsessed.

The seeds of this obsession were sown young, walking with his father in Westonbirt Arboretum, he was entranced. A nonconformist, free-spirited child, he left school early, bright but bored, his passion for doing things immaculately confined to stacking supermarket shelves in perfect symmetry and polishing cars to a high octane gleam. Geekiness lay temporarily dormant while he kicked around doing “the usual teenagerish stuff” until he found himself once again, walking through the trees at Westonbirt, thinking why don’t I do more of this? It came, he says, from nowhere, the sudden blinding certainty that here, outside with nature, was where he had to be. Passion reignited. Nick needed to know everything about plants and trees. Armed with his father’s copy of Alan Mitchell’s *Trees of Britain and Northern Europe* – still on his shelf, dog-eared and held together with yellowing Sellotape – he would drive around voraciously studying trees, saturating himself with one group, moving to the next, only when satisfied he knew everything there was to know. From trees he progressed to woody plants, obsessively accumulating plant knowledge. “I was amazed how much I crammed in in one year. I wallowed in the gorgeousness of it all,” he says.

A three-year course at Merrist Wood, including a gap year spent at Hillier’s and Westonbirt, was followed by a stint as head gardener at Cowley Manor where he managed to plant a small arboretum before being made redundant. Then urged on by a friend, he started a retail nursery at Painswick, with £10,000, one polytunnel and a small shed. Plants included a range of unusual grafted *Aesculus* species and some interesting Chinese tree peonies. From the outset Nick honed his eye for special, rare “funky” plants. “My angle has always been the unusual. No point in being interested in forsythias. I did come at it, with complete focus, from a massive plant nerd angle. Did I tell you I am a geek and a nerd?”

When Painswick fell through. Janie Clifford, a regular customer, offered her walled garden at Frampton, previously

home to Gloucester Old Spot pigs. Just off the M5 it was the perfect location. People piled in.

In autumn, when the nursery closes, he sets off plant hunting with Paul Barney from Edulis, to destinations as cutting edge as his plants: Vietnam, Manipur, Azerbaijan, Mexico and Chile. Although with a nursery, website and mail-order business to run, and two small children, he’s cut it back to around three weeks a year. He refreshingly admits to having far too high an opinion of himself to follow slavishly in the footsteps of the great planthunters, leaving that to “people who can’t think of anything original to do”. In Mexican mountains and forests in Manipur he’s experienced some of the most sublime moments in his life: “Not just cerebrally stimulating, but plain bloody beautiful; glorious on every level.” Each year he returns with nigh on 200 seed lots, which he sends to a friend in Cornwall to propagate. Most of his finds come from the wild. “Genetic variation in plant populations is quite remarkable. There’s that incredible diversity you don’t get in cultivated plants.”

Seventeen years on Pan-Global Plants is, for the discerning gardener jaded by the usual garden centre fare, an inspirational emporium, crammed with idiosyncratic, quirky and special plants that grow well in the British Isles. “Just because it’s rare and unknown doesn’t mean it’s ungrowable,” says Nick. From February to October he works from dawn to dusk and every weekend, adding continuously, and obsessively, to a plant base and knowledge of biblical proportions. While trees and woody plants remain an abiding passion, there’s also the ten-year obsession with agaves. Currently he’s looking at a whole range of ferns. Then there’s the Mexican dahlia, which apparently doesn’t fit any species known to dahlia experts; magnolias, “sumptuous things”, and the lesser known hydrangeas, *H. serrata* and *H. heteromalla*. His favourite? Whatever and wherever his obsession leads him to next.

For Nick would always rather be doing plants than anything else. “I’m entirely moulded by my plant nurture,” he says. □

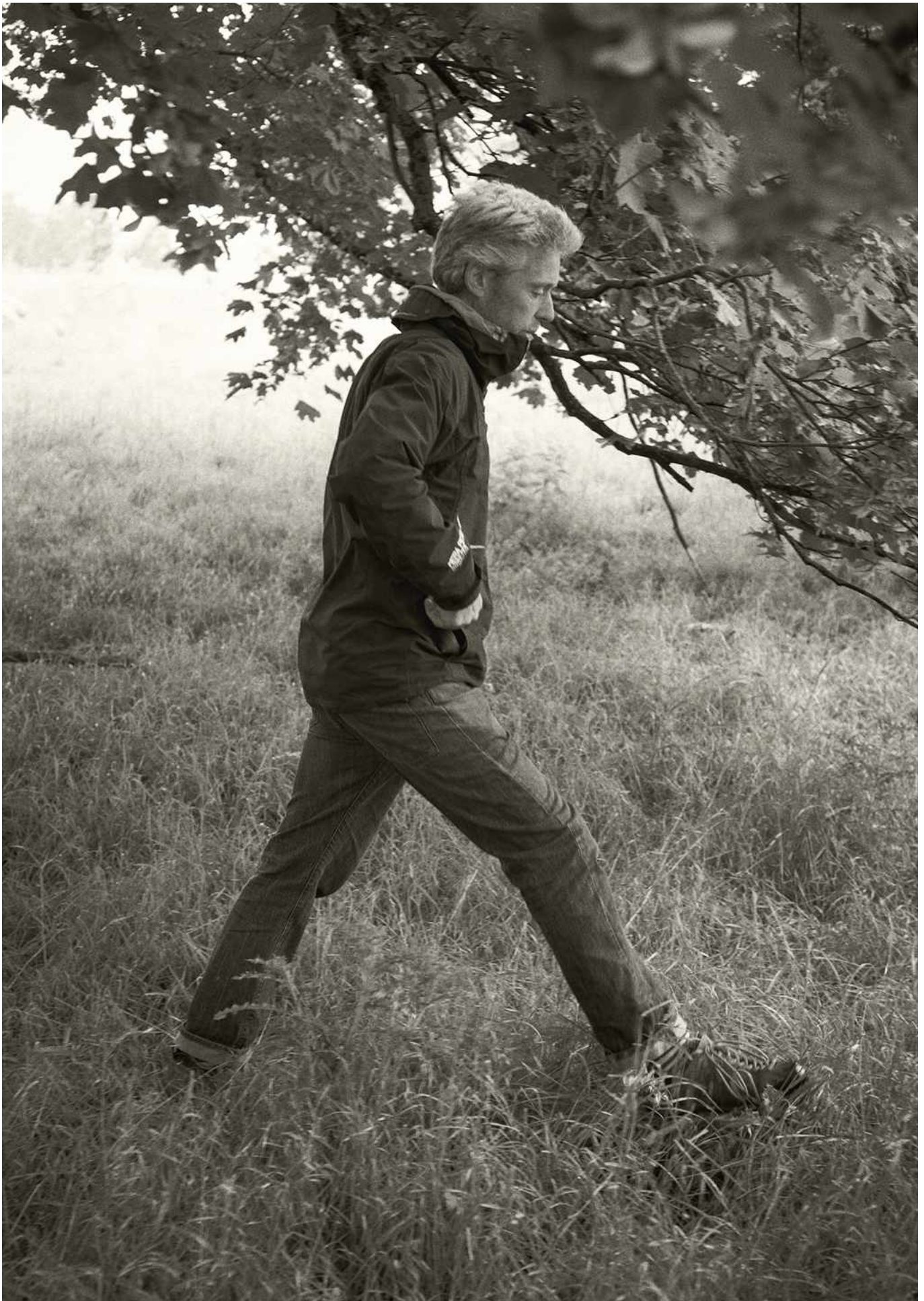
USEFUL INFORMATION

Pan-Global Plants, The Walled Garden, Frampton Court, Frampton-on-Severn, Glos GL2 7EX. Tel 01452 741641, panglobalplants.com

NEXT MONTH

Designer Andy Sturgeon.

I’ve got no problem with being a nerd, although I’m glad it’s plants not matches





In brief

Name Kwekerij Arborealis.

What Specialist tree and shrub nursery.

Where Wilhelminaoord, in the Dutch province of Drenthe.

Points of interest Wide range of lesser-known shrubs and trees, including large collections of *Viburnum* and *Hydrangea*.

Size 17 acres.

Climate Average annual temperature 8.5-9°C, 2°C below national average with longer periods of frost. Rain above national average (75-80cm per annum).

Soil Sandy, enriched by peat and manure.

Hardiness rating USDA 7a.

Special branch

If you want to find the best trees for autumn colour then Sietske Metz and Micha Wieland, the owners of the specialist tree and shrub nursery Kwekerij Arborealis, are the people to ask

WORDS SIMONE VAN HEININGEN PHOTOGRAPHS MAAYKE DE RIDDER



This image The muted colours of the silvery white plumes of *Miscanthus* tone beautifully with the silvery grey wood of Sietske and Micha's eco-friendly house. In spring their green roof is awash with alliums, tulips and muscari that thrive on just 7cm of substrate.

Facing page A young *Sassafras albidum* sapling displays a rich variety of autumn colour.

*Sietske and Micha could have made life simple
by sticking to a limited range of species, but both
confess to having a bit of a hoarding streak*

W

ilhelminaoord is a hamlet in the northeastern Dutch province of Drenthe. It was built in the early 1800s by a charity that gave the inner-city poor the chance to become smallholders, with a cottage and some land.

Two centuries later, in 2006, Sietske Metz and her partner Micha Wieland decided to turn 17 acres of this so-called 'colony' land into a nursery specialising in shrubs and trees, which they called Kwekerij Arborealis.

Fresh out of horticultural college the couple had set up their first nursery on a tiny 2.5-acre, rented plot. There, through a process of trial and error, they built up a business, and after eight years were ready to find a site that would match their big ambitions and allow them to build a house. It didn't work out quite as planned.

"With 17 acres, we bit off more than we could chew, when it came to growing in the ground," admits Sietske. "We just couldn't keep up with the weeds." Today, the couple focus solely on growing unusual shrubs and trees in containers, which they propagate

from seed, cuttings and grafts, and by layering. They could have made life simple by sticking to a limited range of species, but both confess to having a bit of a hoarding streak. "We just can't resist buying new stuff," admits Sietske. "We're passionate collectors of the unusual."

To prove Sietske's point Micha shows me one of their recent finds: *Tetracentron sinense*, a small, multi-stemmed, summer-flowering tree with beautiful heart-shaped leaves. "Its seed is almost impossible to get hold of," he says. "We've also got *Sassafras*, which grows like weed in the USA, but fresh seed is very difficult to lay your hands on."

The pair may be collectors but they're not afraid to let go. Each year, they get rid of everything that has not performed to their standards, or is disease-prone, or needs pesticides, and bring in new plants. "I guess our approach is practical rather than purely aesthetic," says Sietske. "Of course, we want to grow beautiful plants, but I couldn't care less if a new *Hydrangea* has a shade of blue that is just that tiny bit different from all the other

blues. People sometimes forget, we are nurserymen, not gardeners."

Two plants that have a constant place in the couple's nursery are hydrangeas and a collection of more than 100 *Viburnum* cultivars they acquired from nurseryman Ward van Teylingen when he retired.

Taking a walk around the nursery you can see that through a mixture of hard work and enthusiasm Sietske and Micha have achieved virtually everything they planned when they started Arborealis. They have a thriving business, evidenced by their growing client list, including other nurseries, and by the regimented lines of hundreds of one-to-two-year-old, knee-high saplings in containers ready for sale. They even have the eco-friendly house they wanted with a green roof and their beloved hydrangeas and viburnums growing at the back.

With so much on offer at Arborealis my biggest dilemma is deciding how to narrow my choices down. Luckily, Sietske and Micha are always more than happy to share their expert advice, although I'm slightly surprised by trees they suggest. Many of them – *Acer*, *Heptacodium*, *Cornus* – are what I would call shrubs, but perhaps I'm just too impatient. "Wait long enough, train them the right way and those shrubs become trees," says Micha. □

• **Turn over** to discover 12 of Sietske and Micha's favourite trees for providing autumn colour.

How to choose the perfect tree

Think how long you're planning to stay in your current property and how patient you are.

Ask your neighbours about their experience of growing trees in their gardens. You may also be able to complement each other's planting. Eg not all trees are self-fertile, so if you plant the female, they could plant the male.

If you're buying a young tree, check it's not pot-bound and look at its shape. Make sure the top is nice and straight, and that there are enough side branches.

If you're buying a grafted tree, ask which type of root stock was used – this may affect the suitability of your soil type.

Plant when the soil is moist and frost-free, and water regularly during dry spells in the first growing season (from when the tree starts to leaf up until the leaves fall in autumn). Don't make it 'lazy' by over watering.

Stake the tree immediately after planting. If you need to prune, do so just before bud burst in late spring, to avoid infection.

As a rule of thumb a tree's root system is as wide as its crown. Be aware that shallow-rooting trees may get in the way of other planting ideas, and don't forget to factor in sewage and other pipes when deciding where to place the tree.

It's always best to buy trees and shrubs from a specialist supplier to get the best advice on choosing, placing and caring for the most appropriate tree for your garden. It's also worth visiting nurseries and arboretums at different times of the year to find the right tree.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Kwekerij Arborealis, Dirk de Ruiterpad 2, Wilhelminaoord, the Netherlands.
Tel +31 521 38 36 96.
Website arborealis.nl



1



2



3

- 1** Micha packs up a *Chaenomeles cathayensis* for mail order, with an *Akebia quinata* ready for packaging. Most plants can be shipped to the UK.
- 2** Saplings are grown in containers and moved from the growing fields into the sales area.
- 3** Near the small blue hut at the heart of the sales area is a selection of plants of particular seasonal interest for those impulse buys.
- 4** More tender shrubs are grown in the nursery's 800 square metre greenhouse.
- 5** A majestic *Pterocarya stenoptera* 'Fern Leaf' gives an indication of the heights some of the surrounding saplings might achieve.
- 6** Sietske carries a young *Stewartia* sapling through to the nursery, accompanied by Max and Tim, a pair of Drentse Patrijshond. This spaniel-type gun dog is a local breed.



4



5



6

12 of Sietske and Micha's top trees



The owners of Kwekerij Arborealis recommend 12 of their favourite trees for show-stopping autumn colour.

1 *Stewartia pseudocamellia*

Koreana Group

Beautiful flaking, camouflage-style bark in shades of grey, brown and burnt ochre. Autumn colour ranges from darkest claret to bright orange. Prefers peaty conditions and light shade. AGM* **Height after ten years (H)** 3-5m. **Ultimate height (UH)** 12m. **Ultimate spread (US)** 6m. **Hardiness rating (HR)** RHS H5, USDA 8a+.



2 *Mespilus germanica* 'Westerveld'

Prefers a sunny position and fertile soil. Green foliage in spring and summer and a coppery orange-yellow in autumn. Don't gorge on fruit as the seeds are toxic when eaten in large quantities. **H** 4-5m. **UH** 5-6m. **US** 4-6m. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 5a.



3 *Cornus officinalis*

Yellow flowers in spring and beautiful (medicinal) red fruits in September – October with vivid reddish brown leaves. Prefers dappled shade. **H** 5m. **UH** 5m. **US** 5m. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 8b/9a.

4 *Heptacodium miconioides*

Fragrant, creamy-white flowers in late summer followed by pink and purple sepals, and bright-yellow leaves. Perfect for city and courtyard gardens, with full sun or dappled shade. AGM. **H** 4m. **UH** 4-8m. **US** 2.5-4m. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.



5 *Styx japonicus* 'Fargesii'

Bushy Japanese snowbell with finely pointed leaves that turn yellow and orange in autumn. Can be pruned and kept narrow. AGM. **H** 5m. **UH** 8-12m. **US** 4-8m. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 6a.

6 *Acer cissifolium*

Perfect for a solitary position in not too small a garden. Young shoots are grey, with reddish-brown specks that disappear with time. Matte dark green leaves turn an orangy red in autumn. **H** 6m. **UH** 8m. **US** 10m. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.



7 *Acer negundo* 'Winter Lightning'

Acers aren't very obliging when it comes to pruning, but this box elder is the exception. Its feathery, light green leaves turn a soft brownish yellow in autumn. Prefers full sun in well-drained soil. AGM. **H** 6m. **UH** 15m. **US** 12m. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 6a.

8 *Nyssa sinensis*

Foliage is bronze in spring, dark green in summer and a vibrant red and yellow in autumn. A more compact version of *Nyssa sylvatica*, this grows well in moist, humus-rich soils. Needs sheltering from cold, dry winds. **H** 4m. **US** 8-12m. **US** More than 8m. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 7a.

9 *Cornus kousa* 'Teutonia'

Slow growing when young, this dogwood will speed up after a few years then slow down again. Beautiful and ornamental with white, flowers speckled with pink, dark red autumn colour and pink fruits. Will succeed in any soil of good or moderate fertility, but dislikes shallow, chalky soils. Suits small gardens. AGM. **H** 2.5m. **UH** 5m. **US** 3m. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 6a.

10 *Acer griseum*

This paperbark maple sheds its shiny orange-brown skin in the thinnest of layers. The leaves produce a firework display of autumn colours, from scarlet pink to crimson red. Will do well in any soil, unless well-drained. Mind planting distance to walls, given its spreading silhouette. AGM. **H** 6m. **UH** 12m. **US** 8m. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

11 *Prunus serrula* 'Branklyn'

This slender, upright and round-headed tree has a gorgeous trunk, with shiny coppery brown bark that sheds in paper thin strips. White flowering, with narrow willow-like leaves that turn yellow in autumn. Flowers and leaves pale in comparison to that beautiful glossy bark. Needs full sun. AGM. **H** 5m. **UH** 8-12m. **US** More than 8m. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 6a.

12 *Pterostyrax corymbosa*

The epaulette tree is a moderate to fast grower, with a bumpy brown bark on its – generally multiple – stems. Around May to June it is covered in snowy drifts of fragrant white flowers, which will produce loads of hairy stone fruits in autumn among golden yellow leaves. Requires a good loamy soil and a sunny position. Perfect as a specimen. **H** 5m. **UH** 12m. **US** 12m. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 6a.



Artist in residence

Ros Wiley loves to paint natural plantings of grasses and drifts of perennials. Lucky for her, home is the exciting new garden at Wildside

WORDS NOËL KINGSBURY PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MONTGOMERY



Ros in her 'studio', the garden in Devon created by her husband Keith Wiley, which is the inspiration for her paintings.

“We think of the garden as an art form, I love the way that Keith plants, drifts and dots of colour; he knows what I like to paint so I think it influences the way he plants too”

The garden has always been my subject matter, I have always loved painting plants, and I have all this material on my doorstep... I love the colours, I just love colour,” says painter Ros Wiley. Luckily for Ros, her husband Keith is the creator of Wildside, one of the most innovative, daring and vibrant new gardens in Britain.

Photographing or painting naturalistic, perennial-based plantings, or wild plant communities, such as meadows is always a challenge. The loose, wispy, fine-textured mass of intertwined stems, grasses, open flower heads, seed cases and complex arrangements of foliage have proved very difficult to represent artistically. Ros is one of the few who does it successfully. Her paintings initially make an impact through their vivid colour, but many also represent the apparent chaos of stems and foliage that makes up contemporary perennial planting. Although her images of plants are stylised, and sometimes even verging on the abstract, it is very often easy to recognise particular species – she has a remarkable gift for capturing the essence of a plant.

As Keith’s co-worker, Ros has an intense intimacy with plants and his planting style. The couple met at Wye College, Kent. “He was doing Horticulture, I was doing Environmental Science,” explains Ros. In the 1980s the pair worked together at The Garden House in Devon, Ros in the nursery, Keith in the garden. Until 2004 Keith was head gardener at this very special garden near Yelverton, which gave Ros the opportunity to paint a very wide range of planting styles and garden habitats. When the couple left The Garden House, to start up their own business just down the road, Ros had a whole new world to explore. While it is Keith’s unique vision that has created the garden at Wildside, an extraordinary private landscape of miniature valleys carved into the local shale, and then intensively planted, Ros has played a crucial support role, planting, propagating and weeding.

Never formally trained, Ros explains: “I have always painted, although I studied design at college, not painting, and it’s not in the family, we were Cornish farming people.” Some of her work is of particular scenes but a lot are general and nonspecific. “I get ideas from lots of images, I take photographs and work from them in winter, it’s a kind of jamming,” she explains. “Very much like when Keith does planting, that’s jamming too... it’s like going for a run, I get high.”

Ros finds plenty of parallels between her painting and Keith’s work in the garden. “We think of the garden as an art form, I love the way that he plants, drifts and dots of colour; he knows what I like to paint so I think it influences the way he plants too,” she says. Keith agrees. “We feed off each other,” he says. “There are new areas I’m developing, where I’m going to try to make some colour mixes that Ros has painted.” Planting and painting influencing each other – a truly creative, almost unique, partnership. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

To find out more about Ros’s work visit roswiley.com

For more information on Wildside Garden visit wileyatwildside.com





In brief

What Modern private garden.

Where Southwest London.

Points of interest Clever, semi-sunken seating area. High terrace with water. Mainly flower-free planting.

Size 650 square metres.

Climate Sheltered and urban.

Soil Clay with some sand.

Hardiness rating USDA 8a-9b.

Simply stunning

In a London suburb, designer Charlotte Rowe has created a subtly sophisticated garden using a simple palette of green and white

WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER SINCLAIR PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS

What was once merely a neglected lawn surrounded by sorry shrubs has been transformed into a dynamic urban space, with well-defined areas to eat, sit and relax or even play pétanque.



Some gardens are full of fireworks. Long enticing borders crammed with crescendoes of colour, tangles of texture and swathes of scent. Others are more restrained and get their power from their simplicity and architecture. It is the difference between Carmen Miranda (all flounce and zagadoodle) and the quiet sophistication of a Hungarian diplomat. This garden in Wimbledon, southwest London, falls very firmly into the second camp.

It was designed by Charlotte Rowe who changed career about eight years ago (her previous life was all fearfully high powered and involved PR and Ken Livingstone) and since then has completed more than 170 gardens including a Gold Medal winning show garden for the Army Benevolent Fund at this year's Chelsea Flower Show. When she first clapped eyes on this garden it had "an awful lot of large shrubs gathered around a dreary lawn upon which sat, in pride of

place, a rotary clothes line". Charlotte's clients, however, had very distinct ideas about what they wanted: "strong rectangular geometry, lots of clipped stuff and a very limited palette of plants".

The first task was to try and formalise the rather random boundaries – "I designed a central rectangular lawn that regularised the layout of the site" – and come up with the solution to the serious drop in levels. The terrace outside the house is elevated about 1.2m above the rest of the garden which gives it a rather majestic and theatrical feel. From here there are a series of elegant steps: two sets of beautifully lit limestone stairs, a rill that cascades down a polished granite water wall and a razor-cut series of stepped hedges in yew and box: all of which deliver you safely to the lawn.

To your left is a sunken sitting area, which is Charlotte's favourite part of the garden. Beneath a slatted cedar roof is a log fire surrounded

THIS PAGE

Above left This clever sunken terrace, with its cedar-slatted roof, provides an intimate sheltered space in which the family can relax. The fireplace and comfortable sofas mean they can make use of it even on cooler evenings.

Above right Charlotte has restricted flowers to a limited selection of white perennials, including the pretty *Anemone x hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert'.

Right Rounded mounds of laurel and box provide a rich backdrop for the sheltered seating area, and separate it from the full-sized pétanque terrain. Three pairs of multi-stemmed amelanchiers give this area a Parisian feel, albeit with a contemporary English twist.





THIS PAGE

Left Although Charlotte has planted some flowers into this largely evergreen garden, she has limited them to a single border and single colour, and continued the clean, sharp lines with clipped box hedging around fastigate *Carpinus betulus*.

Below left The sophisticated white of *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' adds a robust beauty to the formality of the flower border.

Below right Box hedging creates two steps that link staircases on either side of the upper terrace.



Lighting

Charlotte uses lighting in her gardens to create beautiful and subtle effects. "Layering is really important," she says, "and it is better to light hard landscape features – steps, water, columns etc – rather than plants, which just grow and obscure the

effect." The exception is trees, which are beautiful when lit well, provided the canopy is not too thick. Yews and box are difficult as the light gets absorbed by the sheer number of leaves.

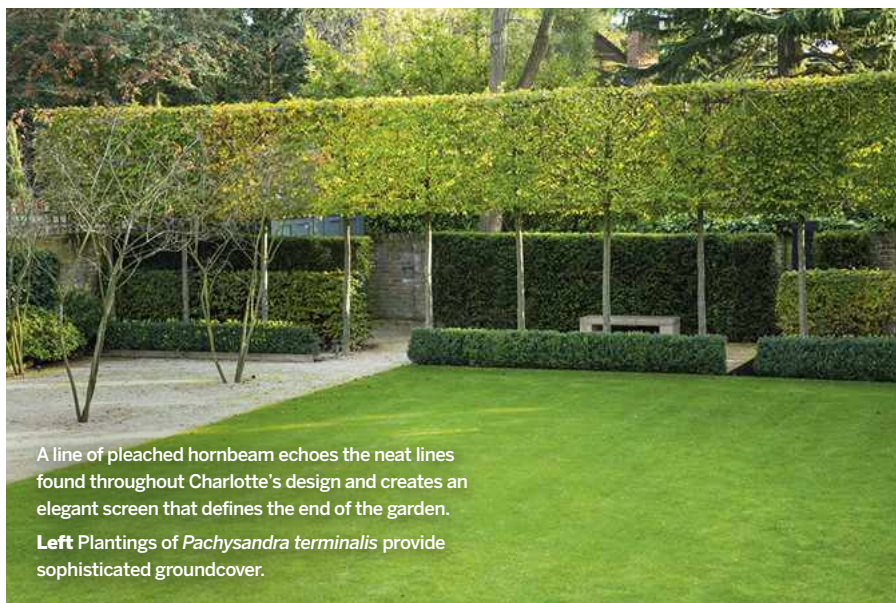
For more advice on garden lighting see page 90.

by deep, comfortable sofas. "The fireplace design is one that we have perfected and use quite a lot," explains Charlotte. "We have just the right amount of draw to make sure that the fire blazes merrily without smoke blowing around." She is good on bespoke and also designed the cushions and some very striking tall pots that form a great view from the orangery and also fill a dead space beside the house very effectively.

Further on is a full-sized pétanque terrain between two rows of multi-stemmed *Amelanchier* and a row of pleached hornbeams that separate off the back part of the garden. This contains a painted summerhouse (rescued from the original garden and jazzed up) and an echo of the rill that we first met on the terrace: a long streak of matching granite ending in a handsome monolith.

All through the planting is restrained – a glorious agglomeration of clipped box, *Hakonechloa* and laurel by the sunken seating area, ▷





A line of pleached hornbeam echoes the neat lines found throughout Charlotte's design and creates an elegant screen that defines the end of the garden.

Left Plantings of *Pachysandra terminalis* provide sophisticated groundcover.



▷ rosemary and box on the terrace – there is one bed which has flowers. “I eventually persuaded them to have bit of seasonal interest so we have hydrangeas, Japanese anemones and astrantias – all whites to liven up the green.” This disciplined simplification of a garden has a very distinct side effect: if you do this then the hard landscaping has to be completely perfect. Without a sprawling geranium (or similar) to muffle an edge, every joint, every step and every surface must be neat, tight and flawless. This is just the sort of thing at which Charlotte excels, “I am very particular about stone,” she admits. “In this garden we went through 13 different options.”

There is always a temptation in gardens like this to go just a little bit too far; to be unable to resist the lure of just a little bit

of colour. However, Charlotte is a very disciplined designer and is unlikely to fall for that sort of carrot and as a result this is a garden that is as restrained and stylish as a Panama hat. Simple in design, immaculately constructed and ageless in its urbanity. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Charlotte Rowe Garden Design,
118 Blythe Road, Brook Green, London W14 0HD.

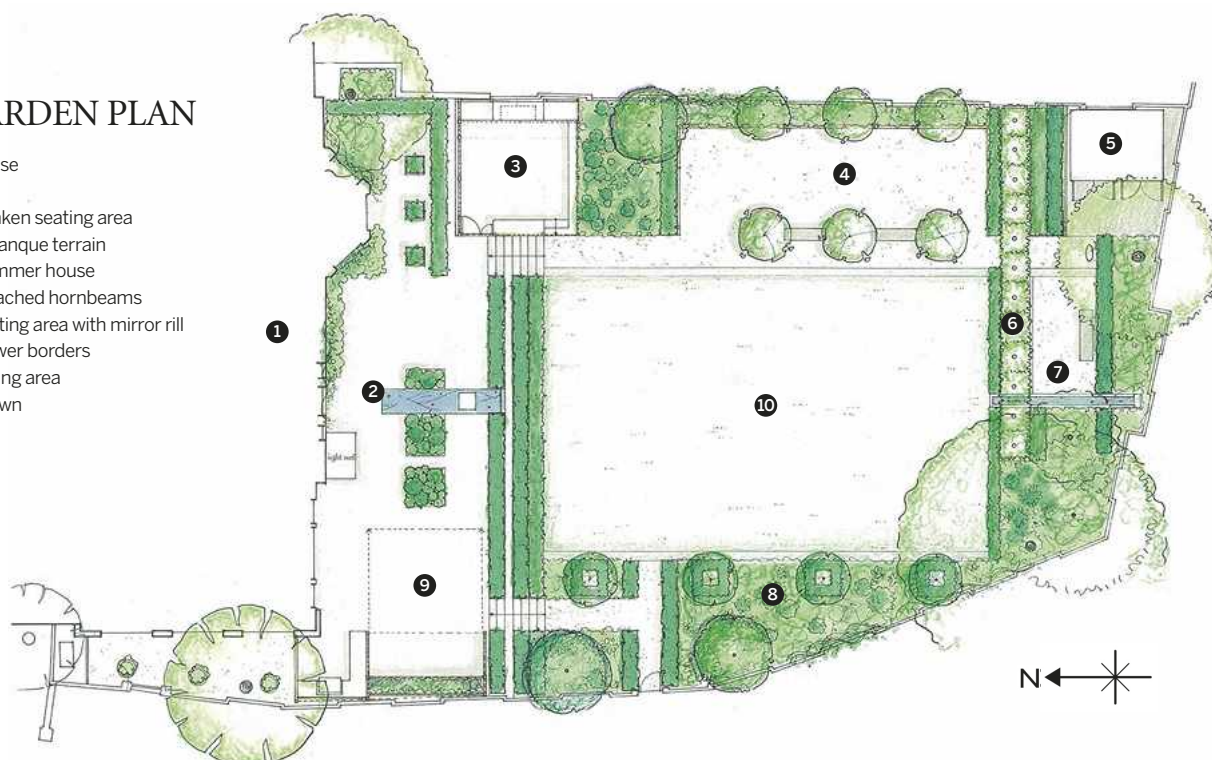
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Email design@charlotterowe.com

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GARDEN PLAN

- 1 House
- 2 Rill
- 3 Sunken seating area
- 4 Pétanque terrain
- 5 Summer house
- 6 Pleached hornbeams
- 7 Seating area with mirror rill
- 8 Flower borders
- 9 Dining area
- 10 Lawn





The water rill adds an air of calm to the raised terrace and creates a gentle divide between the seating and dining areas. Box balls and rosemary continue the garden's predominantly green theme, while the white of the stone echoes the white planting in the adjoining flower border.

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design

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NEWS COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI



LIMITED EDITIONS

Caught in time

Artist Michelle McKinney, who trained as a jeweller, uses woven metal to capture transient moments in nature. In her garden studio in Leicestershire, she fashions paper-thin seedcases of honesty and sycamore, fragile petals of wild poppies and falling maple leaves from copper, steel and brass. She works to commission but is currently offering signed, limited-edition prints of some of her original artworks on her website. To view her work and the prints, visit michellemckinney.co.uk



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SINGAPORE GARDEN FESTIVAL

High-rise gardening

Sacred Grove, a striking garden on two levels supported by rusted steel poles, won Gold and Best in Show at this year's Singapore Garden Festival. Designed by Wilson McWilliam Studio, it explored light and shadow, and featured a green roof made up of around 37 Brazilian fern trees (*Schizolobium parahyba*), underplanted with a tropical meadow of grasses, lilies and orchids. A central opening, fringed with the hair-like roots of *Cissus nodosa*, allowed both sunlight and rainfall to reach the elegant contemplative garden below, furnished with Thomas Heatherwick's Spun chair.



CHELSEA GARDEN

Sense of fun

Another of this year's Chelsea Flower Show gardens has been given a permanent home. The award-winning WellChild garden, designed by Olivia Kirk, which features a curved sensory wall with concealed musical instruments and meadow-style planting, will now form part of the playgrounds for children with special needs at Brook Special Primary School in north London.

ON THE RIGHT LINES

With its geometric patterns in primary colours, this statement side table by Belgian designer Patrick Beyaert is clearly inspired by the paintings of Piet Mondrian. The lines mark folds in the aluminium composite top that create the distinctive corners. The table costs €1,559 as shown, or €1,299 for a white version. Available from outdoorzgallery.com



Table dimensions:
height 50cm, table top
53cm x 53cm.

GARDEN FOLLY

Pointed history

A pyramid-shaped folly, made from recycled concrete, has been installed in the grounds of Doddington Hall in Lincolnshire, the Elizabethan family home of the Jarvis and Birch families. It creates a focal point at the end of an avenue of oaks and lines up with the West Front of the house. The trees, which are shown in a 1707 Johannes Kip print of the gardens, were reinstated by the family in the 1980s. The 10m-tall pyramid also serves as a shelter for visitors, an owl roost and a bat chamber. doddingtonhall.com



DARK ARTS

Seminal artworks by Chinese artist and social activist Ai Weiwei mark the start of a programme of contemporary art at Blenheim Palace, in Oxfordshire. More than 55 works – spanning more than three decades from the early 1980s in New York to modern day Beijing – are displayed throughout the palace, and in the park and formal gardens. Until 14 December; blenheimpalace.com



WINTER INSTALLATIONS

Let there be light

Two light installations promise to brighten the skies this winter. At Kew Gardens you can follow the snowflakes (left) that mark a mile-long trail through 27 botanically inspired light sculptures by French design studio TILT. 26 November – 3 January; 0844 995 9675, kew.org/
Christmas. Meanwhile, at Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, you can take a look at Bruce Munro's installations, including *Field of Light* and *Beacon*, a geodesic dome illuminated by coloured light. 28 November – 4 January, waddesdon.org.uk

Notebook

- The **London College of Garden Design** has set up a satellite training hub in Crewe, Cheshire, where the courses will be co-ordinated by designer Paul Richards. The first short course is Garden Design Drawing Skills, with Andrew Wilson, on 7 November. For further information visit lcmd.org.uk/garden_design_courses.html
- Book now for Garden Makers Day short course at **English Gardening School, Chelsea**, with Sir Roy Strong, Troy Scott-Smith and Tommaso del Buono and Paul Gazerwitz. Restoring an Existing Garden, 13 November; 10am-3.30pm, £145 including lunch. Tel 020 7352 4347, englishgardening-school.co.uk
- Learn how to make natural Christmas decorations for the garden and house with willow weaver Nicki Rowling at **RHS Wisley**. Book now for her course, which takes place on 3 December 10.15am-12.45pm or 1.45pm-4.15pm; rhs.org.uk/education-learning/courses
- A new four-week, online course on **Contemporary Floral Design** with Paula Pryke starts first Saturday of every month at my-garden-school.com, £145.
- **Letters from Gertrude Jekyll**, written in her eighties, to a client at Holmbury St Mary in Surrey form part of the new RHS archive material available online at archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb803-jek. The original letters can also be inspected at the Lindley Library, London, by appointment. Tel 020 7821 3050, email library.london@rhs.org.uk

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1 High lights

A well-designed lighting scheme allows you to extend the time you have to enjoy the garden. Take care not to overdo the number of lights you use, otherwise the effect can be overpowering. Lighting should be used to complement the garden, not take centre stage.



CLIVE NICHOLS DESIGN/CHARLOTTE ROWE



Annie Guilfoyle is Director of Garden Design at KLC School of Design. She is also Garden Course Co-ordinator at West Dean College and runs her own garden design studio.

Lighting the garden

Lighting can be both practical – illuminating steps and walkways – and decorative, but getting it right is always an art

WORDS ANNIE GUILFOYLE



2



3



4

2 Lights, camera...

Designed by Tommaso del Buono and Paul Gazerwitz for their *Telegraph* garden at the Chelsea Flower Show in 2014, this marble water feature demonstrates how effective up-lighting can be in creating a theatrical backdrop in a garden.

3 Lighting the way

Discreet floor-level lighting has been used on this contemporary balcony, designed by Stuart Craine. Low-level spotlights have been positioned along the decking in front of containers, which have been planted with *Fargesia murielae* 'Bimbo'. In a restricted space a large number of small lights are very effective.

4 Hung up on light

Electric lanterns strung through the garden, create a magical atmosphere. The choice of string lighting available now is really quite extensive and although they may not cast a huge amount of light, they produce a gentle glow that is perfect for setting the scene at outdoor parties and events.

In my opinion garden lighting needs to do two things: it needs to perform a function; and it needs to be very discreet and not become a major feature of the garden. If exterior lighting is too dominant, the garden is no longer a relaxing place and to me this conflicts with what a garden is all about. Often gardens are overlit or have badly positioned fittings, when what is really needed is something more subtle.

When thinking about how best to light your garden, your first consideration should be the primary function of each light. For example, is the light performing a specific task, such as lighting a pathway, steps or an entrance? Or is it

simply a decorative light strategically positioned to enhance a garden feature, spotlight a special tree, or cast shadows against a wall?

It is important to carefully consider where you want to position the lights early on in the planning process – don't wait until the paths and terraces are all laid. If you plan ahead, your contractor can lay a conduit (or duct) underneath the paving, which will house and protect the electric cable.

Even if you haven't yet decided on the fittings or the exact positioning of the lights, if you put the conduit in place it means that you have the flexibility of running the lights around the ▸

5 Shine on

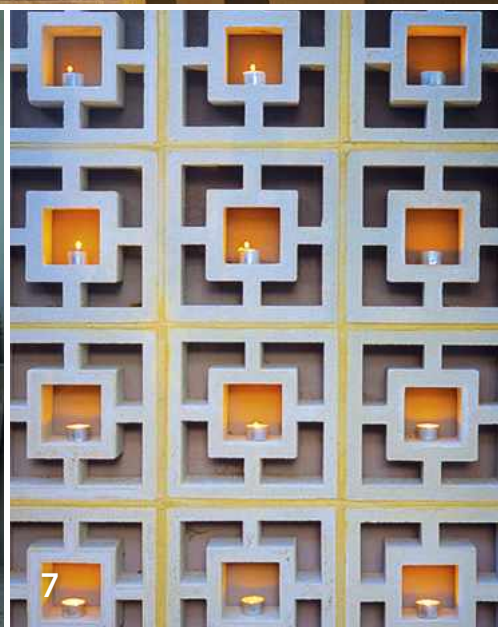
On this roof garden uplighters have been positioned into the planters and around the sculpture. Light is cast up through the plants, which works particularly well with evergreens. It means that the scheme can be appreciated from inside the apartment all year round, whatever the weather, adding another dimension to the garden.

6 Stepping out

This elegant, curved staircase, designed by Luciano Giubbilei, features discreet task lighting set into the walls. These cast subtle light across the treads, ensuring the steps are illuminated at night. There is also a wall-mounted spotlight positioned on the wall, shining down on to a large *Buxus* ball.

7 Votives

Votives have become extremely popular in interior schemes. They also work really well in the garden. This decorative wall has been designed especially to house a collection of candles. The designer has painted the inside of each void orange to enhance the warm glow from each candle.



5 CLIVE NICHOLS, DESIGN AMIR SCHLEZINGER, 6 JERRY HARPUR / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGN LUCIANO GIUBBILEI, 7 MARIANNE MAJERUS, CLAIRE MEE DESIGNS

▷ garden with the cables safely buried. The cost of laying conduit is relatively low, so it is best not to scrim at this stage, then you have more options when positioning the lights.

When choosing lights I would advise you opt for better quality fittings, as the cheaper options will not be as robust and won't last as long. Lights can be secured into the ground or mounted on a spike allowing you to move them (within reason). Wall-mounted and recessed lights are especially useful for casting light across steps.

Building regulations stipulate that only a qualified electrical engineer (and not a general garden contractor) should install lighting. If

cable is laid under soft ground (not under paving), it must be protected by steel-wired, armoured cable and be completely wrapped in warning tape. It should be buried at a reasonable depth where it will not be cut into by a wayward spade. A good guide is at least one and a half times the depth of a spade or 50cm down.

For the best results, I would suggest consulting a lighting designer or using a specialist lighting company, who will advise you on how to achieve the effect you want, that way your garden won't end up looking like Blackpool Illuminations. □

NEXT MONTH Green walls.



8 MARIANNE MAJERUS, DESIGN: CHARLOTTE ROWE

8

8 Uplighting trees

In this London garden, designed by Charlotte Rowe (see page 78), a row of *Amelanchier lamarckii* is illuminated by spotlights set into the ground, at the base of each tree. The lights shine up through the trees accentuating the wonderful, architectural shapes created by the stems. This effect works equally well in winter and summer.

Useful resources

Garden Lighting London

Offers a bespoke outdoor lighting service for London and the Home Counties. Tel 020 8502 4666, gardenlightinglondon.co.uk

For advice on planning regulations visit www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/common-projects/lighting

Lighting suppliers

- johncullenlighting.co.uk
- lightingforgardens.com
- lightiq.com
- lumenalights.com
- moonlightdesign.co.uk
- waterwell.co.uk

Different lighting effects

Uplighting This effect can be used for large shrubs or trees, when the fitting is positioned directly below. It creates a strong, dramatic effect (see above).

Downlighting Here the light is positioned above the tree or feature and illuminates the general area below.

Spotlighting This generally describes the effect when a spotlight is positioned some distance from the lit object.

Accent A fixed spotlight or directional light that is designed to work with

a particular feature, such as a piece of sculpture or a water feature.

Crosslighting Here the light shines across a feature lighting one side and creating a sense of drama, particularly effective when used with sculpture.

Moonlighting This is a term used to describe the lights being fixed into a tree; they will shine directly down mimicking the effect of moonlight from above.

Wall-washing This is when the light is used to cast a pool of light over an area of

wall. You may want to do this because the wall has an interesting detail or simply as a safety measure.

Step-lighting Steps can be potentially dangerous in low levels of light and so wall-mounted or recessed lights fitted above the treads will cast an even light across them – preventing slips and trips.

Silhouetting This looks very effective when the lights are positioned behind a tree or a piece of sculpture and a shadow or outline is then cast on the wall behind.



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01695 573382, lancashiregates.co.uk



CLASSIC FENCING

Traditional parkland estate gate

From £250, Cotswold Decorative Ironworkers,
01608 685134, cd-ironworkers.co.uk



MIXED MATERIALS

Chestnut and copper garden gate

Bespoke, from £495, Ed Brooks Furniture,
01297 560807, edbrooks.com



HANDMADE HARDWOOD

Cromford iroko gate and posts

Bespoke, from £750, Trident,
01782 503782, tridentgates.co.uk



ELEGANT LATTICEWORK

Tall rusted flower gate

Bespoke, from £785, Secret Gardens Furniture,
020 8464 5327, secretgardensfurniture.com



SIMPLE STEEL

Traditional gate with round top arch

Bespoke, from £450 (gate), £250 (arch), Caple
Forge, 01989 740650, caple-ltd.co.uk



SCULPTURAL FORM

Swift gate

Bespoke, from £800, Agnes Jones,
07905 803122, agnesjones.com



PICKET DESIGN

Deluxe 'Iris' picket

Bespoke, from £48, Country Picket Fencing,
01772 378197, countrypicketfencing.co.uk



SOLID WOOD

The Brockhampton Oak

Bespoke, from £4,000 inc installation, Oak Leaf
Gates, 01432 850100, oakleafgates.co.uk

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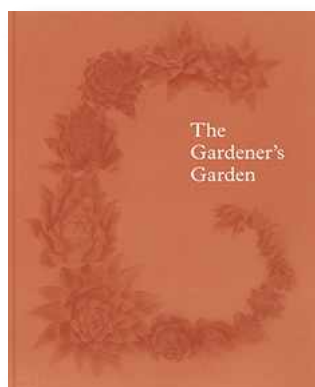
Downtools

Book reviews, readers' letters, crossword



Janet Blair's beautiful New Zealand garden featured in the November 2013 issue of *GARDENS ILLUSTRATED* and is one of the 250 gardens that appear in *The Gardener's Garden*, which is reviewed on page 98.

Book reviews



THE GARDENER'S GARDEN

by Madison Cox et al

Phaidon Press, £49.95
ISBN 978-0714867472

A huge, lavishly illustrated book featuring 250 outstanding gardens of the world, chosen by leading garden designers and historians.

Reviewer Paula McWaters is a gardening writer and editor.

The word 'colossal', used in garden designer Madison Cox's foreword to describe the task of curating an ambitious survey of the world's finest gardens, is a good way to describe the book itself. Weighing in at 3.9kg, this huge tome is best appreciated seated comfortably at a desk; it's far too heavy to rest on your lap, let alone in your arms.

Although the clothbound cover gives nothing away, there is a strong sense of anticipation as you open *The Gardener's Garden* and the clear layout and excellent quality of the photography, paper and printing do not disappoint. I hugely enjoyed leafing through its pages, poring over gardens I know and love, as well as discovering extraordinary flights of fancy I'd never heard of.

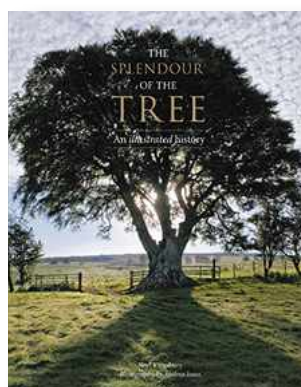
The gardens are arranged geographically by continent with a strong bias towards the UK and USA, leaving areas such as Central and Eastern Europe a little under-represented.

A selected few are illustrated over four pages but most are contained on just one. Each is encapsulated in just 300 words plus meaty, informative captions and although this is never going to be enough to tell the whole story, the write-ups are intelligently compiled and precisely edited (by some 23 different contributors) to capture the spirit of the place. There is a sense of the personalities and romance behind some of these great creations as well as an insight into important historical influences from the Baroque to the New Perennial Movement.

It will appeal to garden history students and designers as well as keen armchair gardeners. Inevitably, as with any 'best' list, there will be dissension but that's fine; reading through this will entice you to start compiling your own personal 'must-see' list: once your eyes are drawn to the gardens on these pages, your feet will soon want to follow.

Book offer

RRP £49.95 each. **Reader offer price £48** including p&p.



THE SPLENDOUR OF THE TREE: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

by Noël Kingsbury,
photographs by Andrea Jones

Frances Lincoln, £25
ISBN 978-0711235809

A well illustrated celebration of the beauty and value of trees, with a text that combines historical anecdote and botanical insights.

Reviewer Dr Phil Gates is a botanist and Guardian country diarist.

Far too many trees are planted so close together that they never achieve their true splendour: a conifer plantation is an uninspiring sight, whereas a solitary Norway spruce can be an object of great beauty. Some trees profiled in this book are a reminder of the splendour that they attain when given opportunities to achieve their full potential, others have been chosen because of the many and varied ways in which they enhance our lives.

Choosing just 91 species from so many candidates must have been a daunting prospect. Those described are grouped on the basis of antiquity, ecological importance, sacred associations, utility, source of food and ornamental value. The book's misleading dust jacket text advertises 'an indispensable cultivation section that advises on the care and selection of trees for the home garden' but this seems to have been omitted, so this is not a practical guide for

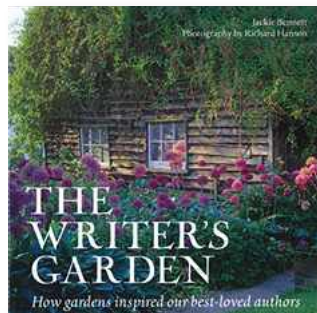
gardeners, more a sumptuous coffee-table celebration of species ranging from the hawthorn of temperate zones to the tropical African tulip tree.

Noël Kingsbury's text is both entertaining and authoritative. He provides interesting counterpoints to old assumptions: sycamore, disdained for the paucity of insect species it hosts in comparison with oak, compensates with vast leaf infestations of aphids that feed tits and warblers. From their perspective it is – in Kingsbury's words – the 'cheap supermarket' to oak's 'delicatessen'.

Andrea Jones's exquisite photographs capture the character of most subjects, although the selection is surprising. Surely holly's splendour lies in its winter display of scarlet berries against glossy evergreen foliage not in its unremarkable flowers? But these are minor quibbles for what is an interesting and useful book.

Book offer

RRP £25. **Reader offer price £23** including p&p.



THE WRITER'S GARDEN

by Jackie Bennett
photographs by
Richard Hanson

Frances Lincoln, £25
ISBN 978-0711234949

How gardens have inspired some of the UK's best-known writers and poets and weaved their way into the pages of literature.

Reviewer Juliet Giles is production editor of GARDENS ILLUSTRATED.

Do writers produce some of their greatest literary works when they have a beautiful garden to look out at? It's an intriguing idea and if true then I'm tempted to add the 30 feet of concrete outside my back door to the endless list of excuses for why my own novel remains unwritten. I'm not sure it is entirely the premise of Jackie Bennett's book but from the evidence of the gardens featured it certainly seems to help.

Bennett has assembled an eclectic mix of novelists, poets and children's authors – from Virginia Woolf and Rupert Brooke to Agatha Christie and Beatrix Potter – and links each one to a garden or gardens that have inspired their work.

The gardens featured are as varied as this literary circle, ranging in style from the grand and formal rose gardens created by Sir Winston Churchill at Chartwell through Roald Dahl's romantic garden at Gipsy House to the more modest plot that

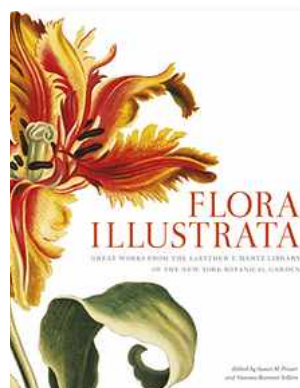
surrounds the thatched cottage of John Clare, the 'peasant poet', who was for many years a professional gardener.

Some gardens have inspired more than one writer. Lamb House in Rye was home to both The Master, Henry James, and one of the masters of social satire EF Benson (and later still to the *Black Narcissus* author Rumer Godden). Both men fell for the house's garden and for its garden room, which will be instantly recognisable to lovers of the Mapp and Lucia novels. And this is one of the great pleasures of the book, spotting all those plants and corners of gardens you remember from familiar novels and poems.

In this pleasure, Bennett is an excellent guide leading you to all the right places and weaving biography with garden tales. Like all good garden books it leaves you wanting to explore the gardens for yourself, in this case with some favourite novels clutched firmly in hand.

Book offer

RRP £25. Reader offer price £23 including p&p.



FLORA ILLUSTRATA

by Susan M Fraser and
Vanessa Bezemer Sellers

Yale University Press, £35
ISBN 978-0300196627

A fascinating look at selected Great Works from the LuEsther T Mertz Library of The New York Botanical Garden.

Reviewer Jodie Jones is former deputy editor of GARDENS ILLUSTRATED.

The New York Botanical Garden was established at the end of the 19th century as 'a public botanic garden of the highest class'. It set out to excel, with a glass house that bettered Kew's Palm House, and a library that was generously funded and skilfully curated from the outset, so its collection now rivals any comparable institution in the world.

Flora Illustrata serves up a cornucopia of delights from the shelves of the magnificently named LuEsther T Mertz Library, celebrating the million plus catalogued items, dating from 1190 to the present day, that it contains.

In their Preface, editors Susan M Fraser and Vanessa Bezemer Sellers express the hope that the book 'captures the wonderful experience of spending an afternoon in the intimate [reading room] among the rustling sounds of turning pages, the smell of age-worn paper'. It's a slightly florid aspiration, but they pretty much pull it off.

Flora Illustrata covers everything from exquisite Medieval European herbals to the development of a thriving commercial horticulture industry in 19th-century America. Each of its ten chapters is a self-contained essay by an expert in the field, almost all of whom write with a sufficiently light touch for their words to engage a general readership.

The library's 1748 edition of *Systema Naturae* by Carolus Linnaeus, justifies a fascinating chapter on the foundation of modern botany, but diverse topics include developments in printing techniques, and how the advent of cheap colour printing boosted seed sales. A fascinating miscellany and an inducement to read more on the topics, and a serious temptation to hop on a plane and visit the library, and gardens, in person. If you can get to New York before 19 January you can see many of the books at the companion exhibition (see page 11).

Book offer

RRP £35. Reader offer price £33.50 including p&p.

Book reviews



RHS HERBS FOR THE GOURMET GARDENER

By Caroline Holmes
Mitchell Beazley, £14.99
ISBN 978-1845338855

RHS VEGETABLES FOR THE GOURMET GARDENER

By Simon Akeroyd
Mitchell Beazley, £14.99
ISBN 978-1845338862

Two handsome and hard-working books from the RHS on growing and eating gourmet herbs and vegetables.

Reviewer Lia Leendertz is a garden writer and Guardian columnist

The RHS might be accused of having ignored the link between growing and eating food in the past: its advice has always been much focused on the growing of the things, less so on what to do with them once they are out of the ground or off the tree. The Society has now produced two beautiful books that go some large way towards redressing that balance.

RHS Vegetables for the Gourmet Gardener by Simon Akeroyd and *RHS Herbs for the Gourmet Gardener* by Caroline Holmes are two handsome volumes that take eating as their central focus. The books themselves are satisfyingly put together, with beautiful patterned and textured hardback covers and a ribbon for finding your way back to a chosen page. There are very few photographs, the books instead relying heavily on botanical artists for their depictions of the plants, a lovely touch that serves both to unify the look of the books and to

bestow upon them a sort of Victorian sensibility that plays nicely on the Society's history and image.

Each vegetable or herb entry is given plenty of space, and provides information on common names, plant type, size and favoured climate, origin, history, cultivation, storage and a generous handful of ideas for preparation and eating. There is more than enough growing information where it is needed, but where growing is simple, the horticulture makes way for plenty of interesting historical and cultural tidbits, making these lovely books for dipping in and out of. Most entries also contain a recipe, plainly written, with no illustration. There is a predominance of classic treatments of ingredients, which suits the books perfectly. So we have: carrots Vichy, elderberry sauce, gravadlax, tzatziki, chilli jam. A pair of useful, endlessly interesting, and very good-looking books.

Book offer

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Other books

From ideas for adding a touch of panache to your garden to a seasonal stroll through the National Trust's best loved gardens

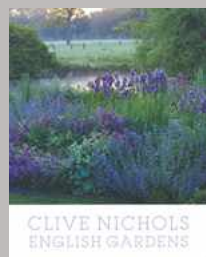


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by Rochelle Greayer
Timber Press, £25
ISBN 978-1604694772

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CLIVE NICHOLS ENGLISH GARDENS

Photography by Clive Nichols,
edited by Bridget Elworthy et al.
thelandgardeners.com, £35
ISBN 978-0992897505

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by Martyn Cox
BBC Books, £9.99
ISBN 978-1849907828

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by Helene Gammack
National Trust, £14.99
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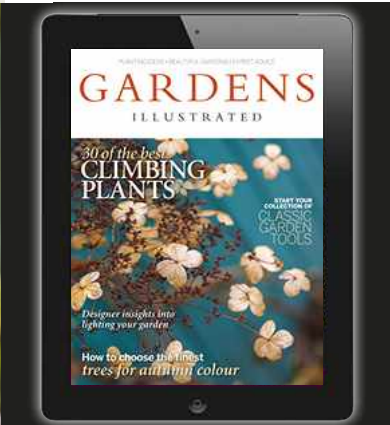
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Letters

Have your say – we'd like to hear your views, so please write to us at: GARDENS ILLUSTRATED, Immediate Media Ltd, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN, or email letters@gardensillustrated.com

Star letter

Painterly palette

I just had to write to congratulate you on the beautiful October issue. For a number of years – many years ago – I studied art at the Birmingham School of Art in Margaret Street. One of the subjects we studied was flower painting and drawing and, of course, we studied the marvellous Dutch flower paintings.

Your feature on rare tulips [issue 214, p44] was a real joy. Thank you so much.

Rosemary Carr, Worcestershire



READER EVENT

A grand day out

I just wanted to let you know how much my friends and I had enjoyed our day discovering the secrets of Great Dixter's kitchen garden.

We were immediately struck by the lovely informal welcome and general friendliness of everyone involved, from serving coffee and flapjacks to, of course, the brilliant talk by Aaron and finally the jaw-dropping tour.

My own fascination with the house and



garden was realised in so many ways, and I had to pinch myself while tucking in to our delicious lunch in the Great Hall – complete with dachshunds present. The day really couldn't have been much better.

I do hope to visit again very soon in spite of living some

distance away in the Derbyshire Peak District. Thanks to all those involved in making this such a very memorable day.

Lou Renfree, by email

WALLED GARDENS

Memory lane

I've been a subscriber to GARDENS ILLUSTRATED for many years, and I always know to put the kettle on as soon as it is delivered. There is nothing better than a nice cup of tea and the latest GI. My way of approach is to start with editor Juliet's letter and take each page in order finishing with a chuckle at Frank Ronan's contribution – often needing more than one cuppa.

In the August issue, to my surprise and delight, there was a feature, with a photograph, on a forgotten walled garden in Glenfinart [issue 212, p86], which the villagers of Ardentinnny have decided to rescue. Having grown up in Ardentinnny this feature brought back so many fond memories. Thank you Ambra [writer] and GARDENS ILLUSTRATED. *Evelyn Stewart, Baltimore, Maryland*

TALKING POINT

Can you picture your garden without the wonderful variety of flowers and plants it has today?



Mike Buffin is chair of Plant Heritage. For information visit plantheritage.com, Tel 01483 447540

The threat of diseases, climate change, deforestation and commercial exploitation is putting plants in their native habitats at risk every day. But while the UK works tirelessly to conserve these, there is little research or funding to protect the wealth of valuable garden plants that have been brought to this country by intrepid plant collectors over the centuries, and which have been bred by nurserymen and made available to the public.

Today this wonderful legacy of garden plants is under threat as changes in fashion and commercial pressure means around 2,000 varieties are lost from the UK trade annually. Not just pleasing to the eye, they could be vital for medical research. If lost, who knows if a plant contained the ingredients to cure one of the many diseases we seek to treat.

Plant Heritage identifies UK plants that are under threat in private and public gardens, and actively conserves around 100,000 plants in its National Plant Collections. Preserving plant heritage is essential to preserving gardens as we know them.

• **What's your view? Write to us by post or email (details above). We reserve the right to edit letters.**

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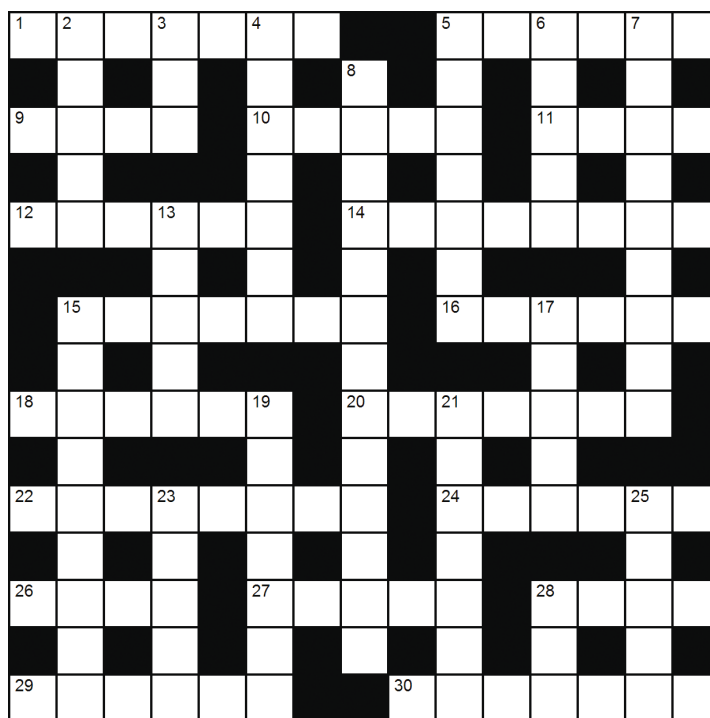
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Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Chips an alternative for this succulent green-leaved vegetable (7)
5 Mignonette genus in calabrese, dasheen (6)
9 Briefly, location of Batsford arboretum's recycled logs (4)
10 Genus of bird's-foot trefoil and type of pond lily (5)
11 Desire a bit of courgette (4)
12 Vegetable garden produce an incentive? (6)
14 Describes leaves that are broad in the middle and tapering at the ends (8)
15 Ribes fruit present, we hear (7)
16 Its caterpillar-like larvae feed on plants – spotted insect? (6)
18 One of the branches of a broccoli head – or left out (6)
20/26 Rotten source of fertiliser for the gardener? (74)
22 Wall-trained fruit tree makes pears lie crooked (8)
24 Timber decay: lacking water? Rubbish! (3,3)
26 See 20 across.
27 Genus of evergreen trees in pine family, partly not sugary (5)
28 Shape of egg thyme leaves – left after eggs (4)

- 29 Charge exorbitantly for material providing winter protection for plants? (6)
30 He asks about yew's first winged seeds (3-4)

DOWN

- 2 Heap by one genus of non-stinging plants in nettle family (5)
3 Open-to-the-public gardens charity – in Woking, Surrey (3)
4 Possibly a clue to genus of flowering shrubs in legume family (7)
5 Makes the sound of dry leaves (7)
6 Foil – remains of axed tree (5)
7 Unscented blue wildflower – excited, I vote gold! (3,6)
8 Cape primrose genus transforms spruce art pots (13)
13 Less common in winter are roses! (5)
15 A period of nippy weather (4,5)
17 Ligneous – will often overgrow diseased yews, initially (5)
19 This will shortly it's said make a prickly plant (7)
21 Mrs Dale cooked apple-like fruits best eaten when decaying (7)
23 Fruit: tomato? Yes, when preceded by love! (5)
25 A fertilised seed develops here (5)
28 It's genus is *Quercus* (3)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

OCTOBER'S SOLUTIONS

ACROSS 6 Half-hardy 8 Reeds 10 Bloomed 11 Sundial 12/14 Turks Cap 15 Essex 17 Tea tree 19 Peapods 21 Pisum 22 Pan 23 Calla 24 Leaflet 26 Unearth 28 Satan 29 Tree rings.
DOWN 1 Alto 2 Thymus 3 Hyssop 4 Brunnera 5 Yeti 6 Habitat 7 Radicle 9 Salix 13 Reaps 16 Stool 18 Rambling 19 Pinnule 20 Stachys 21 Palms 22 Potato 23 Cherry 25 Ants 27 Rind.

Christmas gift guide

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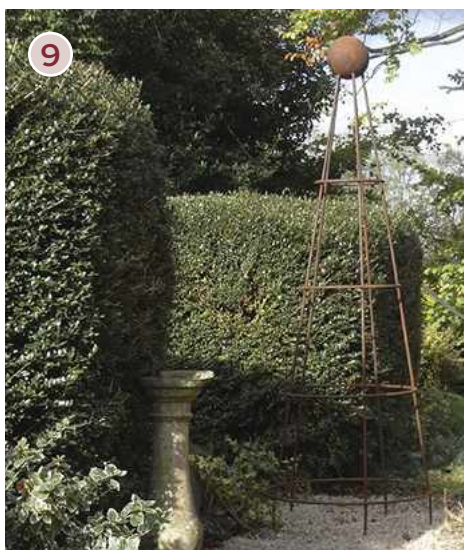
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12



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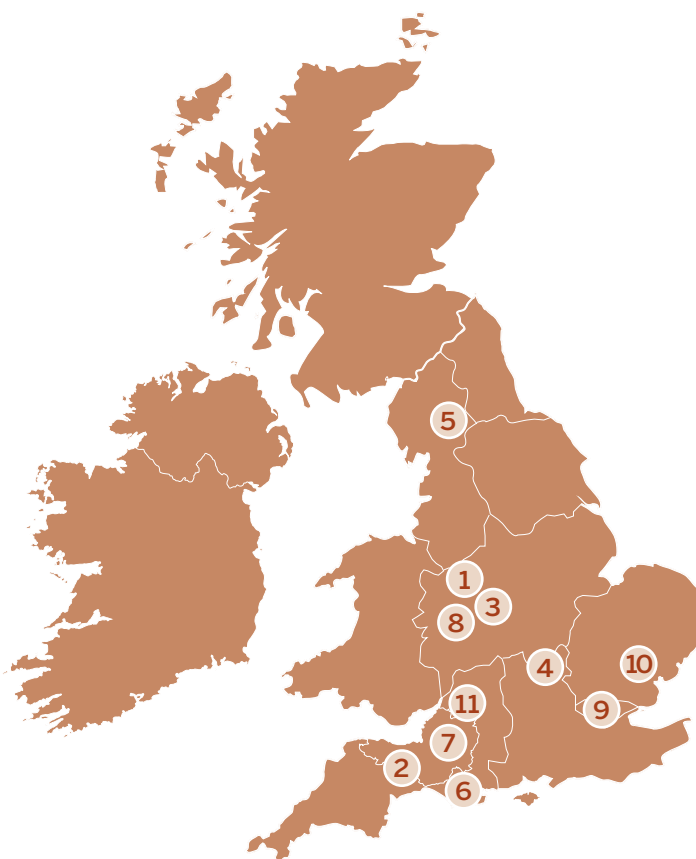
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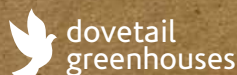


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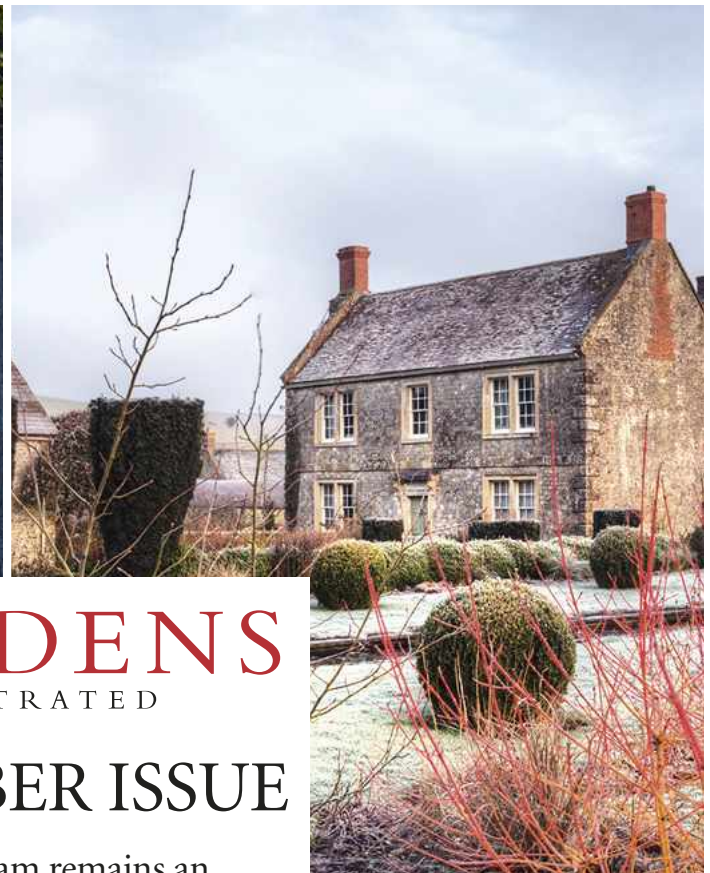
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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED DECEMBER ISSUE

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- A pretty Wiltshire garden in winter
 - Artistic topiary in Essex
- Plus, Christmas gifts for gardeners and the best late-season plants



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Testing the waters

California is in the middle of a drought. Not the best time for Frank to be garden hunting

It has become inconceivable to complain about the rain. California is going through the worst drought in recorded history. It was about to be the longest drought etcetera, but there was a shower last winter which relegated it to second place, for now. Aside from the obvious implications for Californian residents, this situation adds a complication to the process of house hunting for us blow-ins. Looking at potential gardens you can't help thinking about what you might plant and where, and then you have to think, what if, by the time we come to it, there is no water left? It is all very well to talk about xeriscaping and desert planting, but even the most drought-tolerant plants need water to get established.

It is only while looking at empty houses that you realise how bad the drought is. In those that have been unoccupied a while and where the sprinklers have not been running, even the cacti are emaciated. The palms rattle like skeletons and the gum trees are brown. There is no plant this drought-tolerant. We look at withered orange groves and wonder how much water and time it would take to pull them back to life.

Meanwhile, most Californians carry on oblivious. The lawns are green, the sprinklers hiss, the cars newly washed. Neighbours stand at the front of their houses and chat away the evening, each with a running hose in hand, watering nothing in particular, sometimes just damping down dust to pass the time. There is a rumour that hosepipes have been banned up in Santa Barbara, but repeated as though such madness could never come to Ventura County. In Monterey I saw a municipal sign urging people to save water. Below it a broken municipal sprinkler flooded an untended municipal bed. Then, back in Ojai, I saw a young father, tie-dye from head to toe, watering the lushest lawn you ever saw, barefoot at midday, from a hose that could have put a fire out. In the window behind him was a poster



When I start ranting about the lawns and the hoses, they go quiet and look at their hands

encouraging his neighbours to save the planet.

Oddly, the only place you hear any discussion or analysis of the drought is on the BBC, so I am in a good position to buttonhole and prissily educate any native unfortunate enough to wander within my compass. There are interviews on the World Service with the farmers who are boring deep and sucking the aquifers dry, who are inclined to blame the whole situation on environmentalists and their lefty politics. My interlocutors express appropriate shock at this, being, by and large, the sort of people who consider themselves environmental and lefty, by American standards. Then, when I start ranting about the lawns

and the hoses, they go quiet and look at their hands.

It is easy for me to be critical, being an outsider still, with no Californian garden; no self-interest to serve. The day will come when I am buying plants on impulse, not all of which are xerophytic, and doing everything in my power to establish them and keep them alive. There will never be a lawn, but that is no sacrifice, since I don't subscribe to lawns anyway, even in the permadamp of Worcestershire. But there will have to be lemons and limes and avocados and apricots, or what would be the point of being there at all? And all of that will take water: discreet, well-judged water perhaps; but a great deal of water nonetheless, in a land where there is none.

If nothing else it will be interesting, and a great contrast to everything I know. Even if the rain came back tomorrow, the lakes and aquifers won't be full again for years to come. They also depend, for a third of their water, on snowmelt from the mountains, and the snow has been as scarce. We all know, only too well, that you can live and garden a long time without sunshine. We are about to find out whether we can do it without water. □



Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens between the UK and USA.



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